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Scenography and the Staging of Liverpool Identities at the
Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres Between 2004
and 2015

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Arts London
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Abstract

This thesis examines the scenography of new playwriting, set in Liverpool and staged at the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse theatres between 2004 and 2015 to determine how theatrical visualisations of the city relate to different aspects of Liverpool identity. By close analysis of the designs of a series of case study productions, and their reception in local and national press, this research uncovers how particular features and narratives of Liverpool culture and experience were highlighted on stage during this period, through scenography. Further, it considers the implications of these representations on local, national and global imaginings of the city and its inhabitants.

Liverpool has a strong cultural identity that is complex and multifaceted in its construction and viewed differently inside and outside of the city. The term ‘Scouse’, widely understood as encapsulating the voice and character of Liverpool identity, is applied and problematised in this thesis in relation to a particular section of Liverpool working-class identities and culture. This research evaluates how and to what ends ‘Scouse’ is visualised theatrically and the role of scenography in the re-enforcement or destabilisation of the range of identities embraced by this appellation.

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the ability of theatrical representation to overcome ingrained cultural narratives, this thesis argues that the scenographic representation of Liverpool does have the potential to revise conceptions of the city, both in terms of local lived experience and the cultural perceptions of outsiders. As such, this research constitutes the first extensive investigation into scenography and cultural identity at a major regional producing theatre and contributes to the increasing body of scholarly research that recognises, the cultural and political agency of scenography in its act of spatial representation.

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that, except where specific reference is made to the work of others, the contents of this thesis are original and have not been submitted in whole or in part for consideration for any other degree or qualification in this, or any other university. This thesis is the result of my own work. This thesis contains 87,342 words, excluding appendices, image captions, bibliography and footnotes.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

This research examines features of Liverpool cultural identity as expressed through scenography on the stages of two major Liverpool theatres, The Everyman and Playhouse, between 2004 and 2015. Liverpool, a port city in the north-west of the United Kingdom, has a pronounced cultural identity, tied to the area's history and disseminated through music, literature, sport, performance and media. A facet of this cultural identity, known as Scouse, is commonly used to describe working-class Liverpool culture, and, in particular, the city's distinctive accent. This thesis examines how notions of Liverpool as 'place' in Liverpool's cultural identity as a city, and Scouse identities, as in representations of local people, were expressed through scenography on the stages of The Everyman and Playhouse during the selected time frame.

Through a close examination of twelve case study productions, staged at the two theatres between 2004 and 2015, this research seeks to identify ways in which particular material design elements, that together constitute scenography, set, costumes, lighting and the organisation of stage space, conveyed different theatricalised versions of Liverpool and representations of the city's inhabitants. The case studies were all produced under the theatres' Made in Liverpool banner, the term used by The Everyman and Playhouse during this period to market new writing set in Liverpool, or with Liverpool/north-west themes. This thesis considers the potential impact of the ways in which Liverpool, its local communities and experiences were represented in these Made in Liverpool productions, on how Liverpool and Scouse cultural identity is understood inside and outside of the city. It argues that such theatrical visualisations affect the way Liverpool, its culture and inhabitants are perceived locally, nationally and internationally and therefore these representations contribute to the cultural construction of Liverpool and Scouse identities in the world beyond the stage.

The Everyman and Playhouse are two high-profile Liverpool producing theatres, amalgamated in 2003 under one management structure. The Everyman was founded in 1964 by Martin Jenkins, Terry Hands and Peter James, who developed their objectives for a new theatre company at the National Student Drama Festival in the same year. They envisioned a socially engaged repertory theatre that would serve the community and offer

radical interpretations of the theatrical canon. The theatre company found a home in Hope Hall on Hope Street, sharing the space with a cinema and nightclub which took over the building at weekends. From these beginnings, The Everyman survived on tight financial margins which contributed to its continuing reputation as a resilient institution. The Playhouse, established as the Playhouse Theatre in 1917, has long-standing status in Liverpool as a middle-class theatre. Examining The Everyman and Playhouse as one complex, driven by a single artistic directive, allows this research to investigate scenography at two contrasting, yet conjoined models of regional theatre, a risk-taking, spirited repertory and a traditionalist, refined producing and touring venue.

The time frame selected for this research not only covers the first eleven years after The Everyman and Playhouse's amalgamation, but also encompasses several other factors that mark this period as a critical time for the theatres and for Liverpool, offering insights into how both wanted to represent the city and its culture. These include the city's regeneration towards (2004–2007), and event of Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture (2008), the relaunch of the Playhouse Studio as a theatre space (2011), and the demolition (2011), and subsequent re-opening of The Everyman in a new building on the original site (2014). Furthermore, in 2017 The Everyman announced the formation of a new resident Everyman company and a return to a repertory model. At the time of writing this thesis, this appears to signify a definitive end to in-house productions being marketed as Made in Liverpool, making this research an enquiry into a noteworthy, bracketed period of The Everyman and Playhouse's programming.

This thesis is principally an enquiry into scenography, the composition of the visual, spatial and sonic elements of production, and how these are read within the context of particular productions, staged within Liverpool, at these key moments in time. However, it recognises that these scenographic readings are never independent as they are created within the conventions of theatrical production stipulated by writers and directors. The designers of the case study Made in Liverpool productions were working within a framework that is logocentric and predetermined, yet, within this framework, I will show that scenography can reinforce, subvert and add layers of meaning to those of the plays' text.

1.1.1 Purpose of this thesis

This thesis adds to existing scholarship, detailed in the following literature review (1.2), that recognises the contribution of scenography to the ways in which theatre and performance makes meaning and produces knowledge. It represents the first substantial enquiry into the relationship of scenography and regional cultural identity, and therefore contributes towards addressing the lack of academic attention paid to regional theatre more widely.

1.1.1 Research background

The questions behind this research were initially formed during my undergraduate degree (2007–2010) in Theatre and Performance Design at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA). When working on my dissertation, I was struck by the fact that although the university library was well stocked with scenographic texts, there was nothing on design in regional theatre. At LIPA's then partner university, Liverpool John Moores, the library had a whole shelf dedicated to the history, politics, and literary significance of plays performed at regional theatres, but here, design was absent. That this should be the case in two academic institutions with theatre design and performance research courses, in a regional city with six producing and touring theatres within walking distance of the city centre, struck me as a serious omission. After several years spent in the industry as a practitioner, I returned to thinking about this disparity. I was particularly interested in how plays that depict local places and people are staged and read by audiences. This research was motivated by wanting to scrutinise how regional theatres represent their communities and locales through scenography, and ultimately, how these representations impact the perception of regional cities, both for those who experience them daily from within, and for those who know them only from secondary sources.

1.1.2 Research questions

The key questions posed by this thesis are as follows:

- In what ways were Liverpool as place, and Liverpool and Scouse identities, represented through scenography on the stages at The Everyman and Playhouse between 2004 and 2015?

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- How were these representations received locally and nationally, as evidenced by press reception?
- How did these representations draw on existing notions of Liverpool cultural identity, and potentially contribute to reinforcing and/or modifying opinions and presumptions held about the city and its inhabitants?

1.1.3 Brief overview of each chapter

In order to situate this research, Chapter 1 includes a review of the relevant literature and an outlining of the theoretical context, including the three critical lenses, scenography, cultural identity and discourses on space and place, employed within this thesis. Chapter 1 also covers methodology, incorporating archival research, analysis of press reviews and features, and observation of selected case study productions.

Chapter 2 discusses some of the factors that constitute Liverpool and Scouse identities in more depth, considering the boundaries of Liverpool-ness and Scouse-ness, and how the city and its inhabitants have been previously depicted in the media and within cultural products

The case studies of this thesis are grouped thematically rather than chronologically, reflecting their representations of different facets of Liverpool and Scouse identity. The first case study chapter is split into two parts, with Chapter 3 Part 1 examining works that took place in the lead up to Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture (2008) and which depicted the local population's concerns as how preparations for the year were being implemented by the city council. Part 2 considers two productions that took place during 2008 and appear to signify a shift in perspective by the theatres, from their previous critical consideration of the ECOC to across-the-board celebration of the event and of Liverpool history.

Chapter 4 examines Made in Liverpool works that centred on family dramas and which included representations of Liverpool and Scouse families as seemingly symbolic of a wider, imagined kinship between those who have lived in the city. It considers the nostalgia that these productions sought to evoke in local audiences, and their significance to wider understandings of Liverpool as place.

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In contrast, Chapter 5 focuses on two productions whose designs reflect their unpalatable narrative themes and which represented Liverpool as bleak and its inhabitants as dangerous and damaged. It particularly analyses the differing reviews, published locally and nationally of these productions, questioning what effects such visualisations, that draw on Liverpool's negative reputation stemming from national condemnation, (2.1.1) have on how the city is imagined by outsiders.

Finally, in Chapter 6, this research turns its attention to three plays which break with some of the conventions of staging Liverpool as place, and Liverpool and Scouse identities established in the previous chapters. These productions employed moments of expressionistic scenography to evoke a sense of being within Liverpool and the north-west as specified by the text, but went further to show those places and the identities within them as undergoing transformation.

1.1.4 Glossary of key terms as used within this thesis

Scenography and design are often used interchangeably but, as I will expand upon in the literature review (1.2) and theoretical context (1.3), there are important differences between them. This research also includes discussions relating to discourses on space and place drawn from social geography, where the words carry specific meanings that may differ from their use in everyday speech. Further, in its analysis of the theatrical presentation of Liverpool as place, and Liverpool identities, this thesis employs terminology and colloquialisms specific to the region. Therefore, this glossary is intended to help the reader navigate the text

Scenography

The composition of the visual, spatial and sonic elements of production. This includes the configuration of the stage through set, costumes, lighting and the movement of the actors' bodies through space, as well as the temporal process of their change and transformation.

Theatre design

The practice of organising the material elements of a production including sets, costumes and props.

Designer	Practitioner responsible for the creation of theatre design. Within the case studies the same designer was in each case, responsible for both the set and costumes designs, so no distinction is made between the two.
Lighting design	The creation of the lighting states for a production. The practitioner responsible is referred to as a lighting designer.
Sound design	The creation and/or selection of music and sound effects for a production. The practitioner responsible is referred to as a sound designer.
Stage right	The right side of the stage for an actor who is standing facing the audience
Stage left	The left side of the stage for an actor who is standing facing the audience
Liverpool	The port city of Liverpool in the north-west of the United Kingdom.
Merseyside	The metropolitan county that includes Liverpool.
Liverpool identity	The culturally and geographically constructed identity felt and expressed by people born and/or living in Merseyside, and also disseminated in cultural products.
Scouse Scouse identities	An aspect of Liverpool identity that embodies, but is not limited to, working-class culture and experience in the city. Scouse stands for a particular form of vocal expression, humour and resilience. It is commonly applied to facets of Liverpool identity, “Scouse identities”, that have been defined within the city, as integral to its view of itself as exceptional, as different from the rest of the UK.

Liverpool-ness	A sense of Liverpool place (how it is to be in the city) discernible from a performance.
Scouse-ness	A sense of Scouse culture and identities discernible from a performance.
The Everyman	The Everyman Theatre (est. 1964) on Hope Street in Liverpool.
Playhouse	The Liverpool Playhouse (est. 1917) theatre on Williamson Square, Liverpool. Established as the Star Music Hall of Varieties (1898), later becoming the Liverpool Repertory Company (1911) before being relaunched as the Playhouse.
The Everyman and Playhouse	The amalgamated name of The Everyman Theatre and the Liverpool Playhouse. The theatres were merged in 2003 under the Merseyside Theatres Trust.
Royal Court	Unless otherwise indicated, the Royal Court refers to the Royal Court theatre in Liverpool.
Made in Liverpool	Made in Liverpool is the branding given by The Everyman and Playhouse to new writing or adaptations, produced in-house. Although there are some exceptions, typically these productions are set in Liverpool or elsewhere in the north-west of the UK. The origins of the name are explained in more detail in 2.4.1.
Space	Areas defined by civic boundaries, geometry and/or architecture. Liverpool as space is an area that can be pointed to on a map as opposed to how it is imagined or experienced as lived. The Everyman and Playhouse have predetermined stage and auditorium spaces within their buildings that exist prior to the creation of scenography within them.

Place Space that has been transformed through how it is experienced, imagined and manipulated through the presence of people and objects within it. Can refer to both place as created by scenography from theatrical space, and to places in Liverpool determined through how they are practiced and experienced by people within them, and construed by those beyond.

“...” Within this thesis, as well as quotes within quotes, I use double quotation marks to indicate words or phrases as used within this thesis such as titles of chapters or descriptive names given to stereotypes (Chapter 2).

1.2 Literature review

The primary focus of this enquiry is scenography; a practice and discourse whose remit and vocabulary are still frequently contested. In order to contextualise and clarify the field of scenography, alongside texts that relate to cultural identity and social geography, I here present a review of the relevant literature. This succinct outlining of the body of knowledge relating to scenography, identity, Liverpool, and dialogues on space and place is crucial towards situating my enquiry and articulating this research’s contribution to the fields of scenography, and the politics of representation.

A key feature of this research is that it spotlights how scenography is used to communicate aspects of identity at a regional theatre. The scholarship available on scenography, as a whole, tends towards examinations of either national theatres or the work of individual practitioners. Claire Cochrane, in her introduction to *Twentieth Century British Theatre: Industry, Art and Empire* (2011) highlights how there is a rift between regional theatre and that produced in the capital. Work produced in the regions, *outside* of London, is time and again referred to as ‘provincial’ theatre, a term loaded with associations of narrow-mindedness or

unsophistication (Cochrane 2011: 3). In her lecture, *Standing in a Different Place: Regional Theatre and the Making of History* (2013), Cochrane went further, calling for this uneven vision to be addressed in terms of theatre history. Through considering theatre history from a non-London viewpoint we may reveal:

The extent to which a regional perspective can illuminate the diversity of contemporary theatre practice and offer a more equitable vision for the future (Cochrane 2013)

This study of scenography and expressions of identity in productions from The Everyman and Playhouse's recent past is taken from such a regional perspective. It extends Cochrane's research by identifying the contribution of scenography to 'contemporary theatre practice' (ibid). The impact of scenography on the stages at The Everyman and Playhouse has consequences for how the productions and their depictions of Liverpool are read by audiences. My analysis considers what scenography does in its creation of Liverpool places in the altering of the stage space through costumes, set, lighting, and sound. I also consider the associations audiences may bring to bear on their readings of the scenography and its multiple meanings. These audiences include local and national reviewers who then disseminate their interpretations on platforms accessed by readers from within the city and outside of it. In this way, scenography informs a wider cultural conception of Liverpool. Whilst supposedly conceived from the region's perspective, I will show how scenography repeatedly falls into tropes of romanticising (Chapters 3 and 4) and/or showing the city and its inhabitants in an unfavourable light (Chapter 5), and why this in turn, contributes to wider misconceptions of Liverpool and its culture.

This thesis reflects on how these tropes have been influenced by, and in turn potentially have the power to influence, Liverpool's reputation. The city and its communities have a

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global notoriety that has been both simultaneously positive and undesirable, depending on the point of view. This includes, as I will show, the distinct identity and culture considered as Scouse. Scouse encompasses many of the intangible characteristics associated with a Liverpool way of life, understood predominately outside of the city through performative presentation on stage and screen. The social, economic and political history of Liverpool has been covered in a wide range of works that are largely beyond the remit of this thesis. A basic search of ‘Liverpool’ as a keyword in the city’s central library database returns over a thousand entries, covering poetry and novels, personal biopics and academic texts. In order to lend clarity to my research into scenography on the Liverpool stage, and the theatrical presentation of Scouse identity, I have had to be selective, prioritising sources that address the potential factors that contribute to its construction and communication.

This thesis employs scenography as a framework to consider a series of case-study productions, their visualisation and their reception. Scenography, which sits within the interdisciplinary field of performance studies offers a framework in which set, costume, stage management, sound and lighting may be analysed and critiqued as demonstrated in key publications by Arnold Aronson (2005), Christopher Baugh (2005), Joslin McKinney and Philip Butterworth (2009), and Jane Collins and Andrew Nisbet (2010). I will clarify how these texts have served to inform this thesis’s stance regarding scenography. Firstly, the analysis of the case studies takes the view that scenography makes an active contribution to a performance’s meaning and significance. Secondly, the manipulation and organisation of space is crucial to understanding the dynamics of scenography. The orchestration of the performance space in order to visualise theatricalised variations of real-life Liverpool places represents a political act and, as I will show, fabricating Liverpool space and place in the theatre has implications for space and place in the real world.

Scenography as a practice and theoretical discourse remains a contested and frequently misunderstood field outside of theatre academia. The language used by practitioners tends to differ from that used in academic works. In the UK, it remains relatively unusual for creatives to refer to their practice as scenography or themselves as scenographers, instead calling themselves designers and their occupation theatre design. This is recognised in Elizabeth Wright's PhD thesis *Narratives of Continuity & Change: British Theatre Design 1945-2003: An Oral History* (Wright 2009: 22) and Rachel Hann's *A Manifesto on Scenography* (2014). In *Looking into the Abyss: Essays on Scenography* (2005), Aronson designates scenography as the whole visual *mise-en-scène* of production, 'an all-encompassing visual spatial construct as well as the process of change and transformation' (Aronson 2005: 7). Within this study, "scenography" refers to the set, costume and the overall visual and aural experience of production. Individual practitioners, however, are referred to as "designers" and in recognition of the contribution of specific elements to the whole *mise-en-scène* as theatre design, costume design, lighting design and sound design.

1.2.1 Regional theatre

This thesis addresses the lack of attention paid to regional theatre and to the connection between what is seen on its stages and its cultural identity. Regional theatre has a chequered history in the UK, with financial precarity and a paucity of critical attention leading to frequent marginalisation. In her lecture, Cochrane described the contribution of regional and local theatres as 'remaining obscure' (Cochrane, *ibid*). This is in part due to there being an inequality of funding and of 'resources, skills, businesses' (*ibid*) allocated to work produced in the capital as compared to the rest of the UK. Despite regional theatres

– including The Everyman and Playhouse – securing national transfers and acclaim, they still struggle against this pronounced imbalance. I will return to literature that specifically traces the tribulations and triumphs in the histories of The Everyman and Playhouse in 1.2.9. However, I begin with a brief overview of the key texts that inform how this thesis considers the current regional theatre landscape.

This study repeatedly refers to *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council 1984-2009* (2010), edited by Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin. The collection has been essential in understanding how regional theatres have shaped their artistic policies. Dorney and Merkin's anthology sheds light on how the contemporary artistic policy of many regional theatres was shaped in response to the Arts Council's *The Glory of the Garden: The Development of the Arts in England, a Strategy for a Decade* (1984). In her chapter, 'Devolve and/or Die: The Vexed Relationship Between the Centre and the Regions 1980-2006' (2010: 69-104) Merkin details how this strategy called for the decentralisation of arts council funding (Merkin 2010: 69). In doing so, this *The Glory of the Garden* strategy compelled regional theatres to be accountable for the support received and to seek additional locally-based funding. With theatres encouraged to be business-minded and multicultural, this led to speculation as to whether regional, locally focused theatres were still relevant. Work with local themes was increasingly deemed parochial and lacking the perceived sophistication of the capital. This led to regional theatres attempting to increasingly broaden their remit. This study will show how, despite their continuing commitment to local work, The Everyman and Playhouse demonstrate concern that their output appeals to a wider audience.

UK regional theatre in the 21st century is described by Dorney and Merkin as in an ‘era of crisis’ (Dorney and Merkin 2010: 2). This ‘crisis’ (ibid) has been long brewing with a quarter of the UK’s regional theatres having closed since 1979.¹ The political and economic struggles of The Everyman and Playhouse are well documented within their archives² and in works such as George Rowell and Anthony Jackson’s *The Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain* (1984). However, a plethora of Arts Council and policy reports establish this battle against lack of funding as having reached a critical point in the early 2000s. Papers including *Functions of the English Regional Producing Theatres* (Boyden 2000), *Theatre Assessment* (Arts Council England [ACE] 2009) and *Great Art for Everyone* (ACE 2010) reveal how inadequate funding streams continue to determine the artistic policies of regional theatres and limit their output.³ For example, *The National Policy for Theatre in England* (2000) identified that ‘lack of funding’ was still the ‘key barrier to change’ (ACE 2000: 2) faced by regional theatres. The disparity between this lack in the regions and comparatively well-funded houses of the capital was addressed in *Rebalancing our Cultural Capital* (2013). The report was compiled by three independent arts professionals: Christopher Gordon, David Powell and Peter Stark. Their findings, based on quantitative data, drew attention to the extremity of this imbalance.⁴ Although theatre is not the focus of Gordon, Powell and Stark’s report, they point to regional houses as having been particularly badly served by current ACE policy:

¹ Turnbull, O. (2008) *Bringing Down the House: The Crisis in Britain's Regional Theatres*. pp. 9-10.

² The Everyman archive includes sporadic documentation of the theatre’s finances from the 1970s to the late 1990s. The last semi-complete set of board meeting documents and budgets is from 1998 (EVT/A/R/000004), although there are later records that refer to individual shows.

³ In 1994 the Arts Council of Great Britain changed its name to Arts Council England with the commonly used acronym ACE.

⁴ For example, they compared the ACE/Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) expenditure per head in London (£68.99 per capita, with the rest of the UK (£4.58 per capita). (Gordon, Powell and Stark 2013: 8).

.... regional orchestras and producing theatres continue to be required by ACE to achieve substantial funding for their revenue support needs from local government, this has not generally been the case for many of London's arts organisations that are of wider than borough or sub-regional significance. (Gordon, Powell and Stark 2013: 26)

In their requirement to gain the support of ACE and the local government, regional theatres find themselves servants to two masters. They must simultaneously show themselves to be all encompassing and relevant outside of their region whilst maintaining a local focus.

Olivia Turnbull's *Bringing Down the House: The Crisis in Britain's Regional Theatres* (2008) gives particular attention to The Everyman as a 'survivor' of this difficult landscape (Turnbull 2008: 111). She devotes a full chapter (ibid, pp. 167-187) to how The Everyman has managed to endure financially, including the importance of 'public support' (ibid, p. 169). What emerges from examining The Everyman and the Playhouse's ability to prevail against these economic and political challenges is this 'public support' (ibid). The theatres' relationships with their local, Liverpool communities have been vital to their survival. The theatres' representation of those communities and of Liverpool is therefore, a crucial feature of their productions. The scenography employed to visualise Liverpool; the city, the stories, the people, is also affected by the theatres' finances. In Dorney and Merkin (2010), the ex-artistic director of The Everyman, Glen Walford articulated the theatre's frustration in not being able to deliver production values that matched the ambition of the programming. In her chapter, 'The Gang of Forty: A Response to The Glory of the Garden' (Walford 2010: 55-69), Walford states that The Everyman's 'imaginative but poorly equipped sets' let down the theatre in reminding audiences of their funding neglect (ibid, p. 58). Although her comments are specific to the 1980s (when the report was

published), they demonstrate how scenography is important in shaping how *The Everyman* is perceived by its local audiences, as well as illustrative of how those local people are perceived through their theatrical visualisation.

1.2.2 Scenography and theatre design

Theatre design as a practice, situated within the umbrella term of scenography, is increasingly taught as a practical and academic discipline within arts universities and drama schools. Texts written by practitioners that set out introductions to the industry and practical overviews of designing for stage are fundamental teaching aids and resources for students learning the role and skills of being a designer. Works commonly found on BA and MA reading lists include those by Michael Holt (1994), Gary Thorne (1999), Colin Winslow (2006), Stephen Di Benedetto (2012), Lynne Porter (2014) and Michael Pavelka (2015). These “How-to” guides explore the designers’ methods and process of ‘visual thinking’ (Di Benedetto 2012: 49) through examples of productions. However, these texts do not offer any critique of designs beyond being examples of successful practice. Such texts are indispensable to theatre design students in explaining design process but are not concerned with wider influences politically and socially related to scenography or scenographic research.

There also exist works that spotlight what the industry recognises as best practice through biographies of individual designers or compilations organised by a definitive grouping. Examples of these include Aronson’s *American Set Design* (1990), Cathy Courtney’s *Jocelyn Herbert: A Theatre Workbook* (1993), Aronson’s *Ming Cho Lee: A Life in Design* (2014), and the autobiographical *Ralph Koltai: Designer for the Stage* (2014). McKinney expands this model in

The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography (2011) with a chronological review of the practice of famous designers utilised as a structure through which to present an overview of developments in scenographic practice. These texts recognise how the contributions of individual designers have changed and influenced the direction of theatre. By focussing on the careers of particular designers, or on a cross-section of practice, the authors situate productions as having had bearing on the theatrical landscape at that point in time and space. For example, Courtney (2011) demonstrates how the ground-breaking designer Herbert⁵ was integral to the evolution of the aesthetic of The Royal Court Theatre in London. Through her in-depth examination of Herbert's career, her professional relationships and collaborations, Courtney establishes her as having had a 'great personal influence on the Court structure' (Peggy Ashcroft [in] Courtney 1993: 212). Aronson's biography of Ming Cho Lee (2014), goes further in its recognition of Lee's designs and teaching as having impacted on the shift of American theatre as a whole towards embracing non-representational design. My research, in contrast to some of these cited examples, is bracketed by a set time period as well as a locus and genre, Made in Liverpool productions at The Everyman and Playhouse theatres. However, rather than unpick examples of best practice, my research aims to explore repeated patterns of visual styles and tropes observed in a range of case studies.

A central text in understanding the particularities of the designer's role is Pamela Howard's *What is Scenography?* (2002). Howard utilises case studies from her renowned personal practice to present a wider commentary on the nature of scenography and the reading of

⁵ The importance of Herbert's process and approaches to design and collaboration on her influence on the Royal Court's scenography is also recognised in *The Sketchbooks of Jocelyn Herbert* (Farthing and Eyre 2011) and by Sophie Jump's (2015) doctoral research, *The Convergence of Influences on and Evolving Praxis of Mid-Twentieth-Century British Theatre Design (1935-1965) Through a Close Study of Selected Works by Motley and Jocelyn Herbert*.

stage space. She argues for the repositioning of the scenographer (as she refers to designers throughout) as ‘creative directors’ and for scenography to be understood as an ‘approach’ to theatre making (Howard 2002: 220, 218). She presents a holistic view as to what constitutes scenography yet still highlights its principle function as enhancing, revealing and illuminating the text (ibid. p. 33). Her definition of scenography requires its creator look for ‘visual clues’ in the text and find a ‘common language’ with the director (ibid, p. 44, 130). Her recognition of the designer’s right to claim authorship of the *mise-en-scène* and be valued as an essential collaborator is foundational to this research’s championing of scenography’s capacity to make meaning. Where this enquiry departs from Howard is in its concentration on the productions’ impact, as opposed to their development, and considering scenography as capable of transmitting information and expressing emotional states outside of those specified in the scripts.

It should be noted that texts that highlight eminent practice written by practitioners are not typical, Howard (2002) and Koltai (2014) being notable exceptions. Wright’s PhD thesis (2009) asserts that the dearth of designers’ voices commenting on their own work has amounted to a situation where:

...the lack of critical discourse and the inaccessibility of theatre designers' own reflections on practice is understood to have contributed to a situation in which attitudes and approaches remain largely unchallenged from one generation of the profession to the next. (Wright 2009: 2).

Wright, along with Ellie Parker in her thesis *Design and Designer in Contemporary Theatre Production* (2000), conducted extensive interviews with designers as a primary part of their PhD methodologies. This thesis contains interviews as a supplementary source, recognising the importance of the inclusion of the designers’ voice, even though their personal

experience of productions is not the focus of this thesis. I consider the impact of scenography as separate from the designers' intention. This recognises that audiences and reviewers are rarely concerned with what was intended by the designer and this has little influence on how designs will be read.

Scenography is rapidly expanding as a critical discourse and field of analysis across a range of theatre and performance practices. The Theatre and Performance Research Association (TAPRA) and the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) have well-established working groups dedicated to scenography and academic research journals including *Scene*, *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* and *Contemporary Theatre Review* have published a wide range of articles relating to the field. Collins and Nisbet's *Theatre and Performance Design: A Reader in Scenography* (2010) has become a seminal text in the way that it situates scenography as a field of research as well as a practice. The curated collection of texts encompasses a range of theoretical perspectives and demonstrated how scenography can be understood at the intersection of a number of other disciplines and theoretical areas. These include ways of seeing (Collins and Nisbet 2010: 5-56), examination of the body in space (ibid, pp. 231 -301) and, as is central to this thesis, space and place (ibid, pp. 65-133). In 2015, Routledge launched a publication dedicated to design and scenographic practices: *Theatre and Performance Design, a Journal of Scenography* (eds. Aronson and Collins). The aims and scope of the journal outline its objectives as being to 'critically evaluate the effect of scenography on the aesthetics and politics of performance' (*Theatre and Performance Design, a Journal of Scenography* 2015).⁶ In publishing work that

⁶ Available at <www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=rdes20>. Accessed 19 June 2018.

‘facilitates dialogue’ (ibid) between those making and those scrutinising scenography, the journal is dedicated to narrowing the gap between the theory and the practice.

1.2.3 Scenography as knowledge producing

This thesis adds to the growing corpus that recognises scenography as knowledge producing and able to carry meanings independent from the text and direction.

Christopher Baugh, in *Theatre, Performance and Technology* (2005) traces how advances in stage technology, especially developments in lighting, offered new ways that scenography could configure a space that were not reliant on imitating ‘a pre-existing material reality’ (Baugh 2005: 62). He emphasises that, once liberated from representational stage design, scenography began to be recognised as having the potential to make a significant contribution towards how the final performance was read and interpreted. Multiple meanings can be inferred from what the audience see and hear in terms of set, costume, light and sound according to how they are configured within the theatrical space.

In her PhD thesis *The Nature of Communication between Scenography and its Audiences* (2008) McKinney asserts that scenography has a phenomenological effect on the audience and an agency whereby ‘scenographic materials may in themselves carry meaning independently from the performers’ (McKinney 2008: 83). McKinney’s thesis drew on her own practice, directly surveyed audience response and employed semiotics as her primary mode of analysis. Her recognition of scenography’s capacity to ‘carry meanings’ aligns with the perspective taken by this thesis in that my approach to analysing the case study productions recognises the materiality of design (the set, costumes, lighting) as capable of

communicating metaphors and symbols of Liverpool and Scouse identities in conjunction with, but also independently of the text (ibid).

Accepting that scenography is integral to how a production is ultimately perceived challenges the text-based focus of theatre. Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (1993) marked a turning point in performance analysis, recognising this shift from a logocentric view of theatre towards:

Sequences and correspondences, nodal and condensation points of perception and the constitution of meaning communicated through them (however fragmentary it may be) in visual dramaturgy are defined by optical data. A theatre of scenography develops. (Lehmann 1993: 93)

By these 'sequences and correspondences', Lehmann refers to symbols and patterns that the audience read from what they see, conditioned by their own points of perception. He refers to how spaces, objects, images, and gestures are 'torn from their familiar spatio-temporal continuum' and bestowed with new meanings, connections and interpretations (ibid, p. 110). Lehmann argues that a 'theatre of scenography' is a two-way process, in that it is not only what is seen within the performance by the audience, but also how it is seen, that constitutes a 'theatre of complex visibility' (ibid: 110, 94). Visuality is contingent on the context in which the performance is taking place. For the productions considered in this thesis, this context is two-fold. Made in Liverpool productions take place within the actual city of Liverpool and its environs, and within the space the city occupies in the imaginations of the audience.

Maaïke Bleeker's *Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking* (2011) defines visibility as the act of audiences looking at theatre from their individual perspectives. These perspectives

condition the way that they look at a performance and ultimately their experience and interpretation of what they see. She states that an audience is never ‘just looking’ but is engaged in ‘representational thinking’ (Bleeker 2011: 16, 17). Their ‘locus of looking’ informs how the audience evaluate the way places and events are presented on stage against how they deem these to be in the real world (ibid, p.32). A similar proposition is made by Kathleen Irwin in her chapter ‘Scenographic Agency: A Showing-Doing and Responsibility for Showing-Doing’ (2017). Irwin argues that the agency cited in her title is inseparable from the ‘exchange of intention and reception’ that occurs between an audience and the scenography (Irwin 2017: 112). The ‘dialogue set in motion’ by the audience bringing their own knowledge and prejudices to bear on what they see, means that the scenography is actively producing meanings (ibid). Any assumptions as to an audience’s preconditioned outlook and bias is speculative. Yet, an audience in Liverpool, watching a play about Liverpool can be recognised as particularly enabled ‘to project themselves into the onstage world by their familiarity with the city at that moment in time (Bleeker 2011: 15).

1.2.4 Scenography and identity

This research draws links between scenography and the cultural identity of Liverpool. The reciprocal relationship of theatre practice and cultural identity has been previously explored in terms of national identity, including in texts by Jen Harvie (2005), Stephen Wilmer (2008) and Nadine Holdsworth (2014). However, little literature exists that spotlights local and regional identities, or that explicitly makes reference to scenography. Despite containing almost no mention of scenography, Maria Barrett’s PhD ‘*Our place: Class, the Theatre Audience and the Royal Court Liverpool*’ (2016) has been invaluable in its focus

on the relationship of a Liverpool theatre with its community. Barrett's investigation into theatre-going and class is underpinned by Pierre Bourdieu's (1986, 1990, 2010) work on cultural capital and structured by case-study productions from the Royal Court Liverpool. Not only has Barrett's thesis provided a context for this study in presenting a concise overview of Liverpool theatre-going (Barrett 2016: 121-30), but also her work links the cultural identity of the city to its depiction on stage. Barrett's research has been useful in understanding how Liverpool theatre contributes to the formation of local identity through examining audience experience, impressions and interactions with productions. She directly addresses the boundaries and staging of Scouse identity, relating it to a genre of bawdy 'working-class comedy' (ibid, p. 107). Barrett directs the reader to how certain symbols are repeatedly employed within such productions to express Scouse identity, however, she describes these as occurring within the genre of the plays and their use of language. The focus of this research is on identity as expressed through scenography and it does not restrict representations of Scouse to one genre of production, as Barrett does with comedy. Therefore, although her research has been extremely helpful, this has been largely in informing how this thesis considers Scouse identity, and the context of theatre-going in Liverpool.

The doctoral research projects of Esther Armstrong (2010) and Siobhan O'Gorman (2014) explicitly relate the expression of identity in the theatre to the scenography, and also, as I will return to in 1.2.5, stress the importance of space within this process. This thesis draws heavily on Armstrong's articulation of the political agency of scenography in her PhD thesis *A Scenographic Analysis of Emergent British 'National' Identity on the Stages of the National Theatre between 1995-2005* (2010).⁷ Framed by the tenure of the various artistic directors

⁷ Armstrong also acted as a co-supervisor during this doctoral study.

engaged over this period and their changing artistic policy, through a forensic study of the plays produced during this time frame, Armstrong uncovers how scenography at the National Theatre engaged politically in its visualisation of British identity. Her research examines why certain design styles appear to have been fashionable at certain points in time and what these stylistic trends indicate about the image of British identity the artistic directors were trying to convey. Her analysis highlights the multiple factors that affect the visualisation of identity on stage, including the instability of the ‘visual markers of place’ in a globalised world (Armstrong 2010: 88). Following on from Armstrong’s London-centric study, this research will consider how the markers of Liverpool as place are also rendered unstable due to the ways the city and the identities encompassed by it are understood differently locally, nationally and globally. Further, this research examines how the way the city and its inhabitants are presented on the stages of Liverpool theatres has the capacity to re-enforce and/or change those understandings.

At the time of writing, O’Gorman’s full thesis was under embargo. However, she has published an article relating to her PhD research: ‘Scenographic Interactions: 1950s’ Ireland and Dublin’s Pike Theatre’ (2014). The article features O’Gorman’s research into how scenography at the Pike Theatre responded to Ireland’s anxiety as to its international image. O’Gorman establishes theatre as having been an essential part of Ireland’s ‘visual culture’ (O’Gorman 2014: 26). During the time frame set by O’Gorman, the republic was heavily promoting a particular cultural image of itself in light of the global attention it received when it left the British Commonwealth in 1949. This thesis also features a time of heightened global attention, encompassing the lead into and event of Liverpool’s year as the European Capital of Culture in 2008. I will argue that, in a similar way to the effects identified by O’Gorman at the Pike (p. 33), the changes this global scrutiny brought about

in terms of cultural and political attitudes were visible in the scenography of plays produced at The Everyman and Playhouse, particularly during the ECOC period 2003 – 2008 (Chapter 3).

1.2.5 Scenography and space

The organisation of space is a vital component of scenography and one of the primary ways in which it is read by audiences. Scenography produces meanings via its configuration of the performance space (Howard 2002, Armstrong 2010), and through the audience being able to understand these configurations as representations of places and emotional states (McKinney 2008, Irwin 2017). How the scenography of *Made in Liverpool* productions presented Liverpool places through the orchestration of the Everyman and Playhouse spaces, and how these places were construed by local and national audiences is a foundational question in this research.

Collins and Nisbet's (2010: 65-138) overview of scenography and space provided a jumping off point for how the terms are understood within this thesis as 'underpinning... all aspects of scenographic practice' (ibid, p. 65). The crucial function of space is also central to Howard's previously cited *What Is Scenography?* (2002). Howard positions space at the forefront of the designer's vocabulary, describing it as 'a living personality with a past, present and a future' (2002: 2). The space, whether a traditional stage or a site-specific location, is understood to be a 'material' that the designer is charged with 'imprinting' (ibid, p. 8, 17). The placing of set, furniture and/or costumed actors within it allows these elements to acquire 'metaphoric meaning' (ibid, p. 13), in that they gain new significance based on the way the designer has arranged them in the space. Space as manipulated by

scenography can therefore be understood as a site of what Howard refers to as ‘infinite possibilities’ (ibid, p. 15). This potentiality is also recognised by Erika Fischer-Lichte in *The Transformative Power of Performance; A New Aesthetic* (2008). Though Fischer-Lichte’s text is not directly concerned with scenography, her comments on spatiality relate to Howard’s in her recognition of scenography’s capacity to unfix space, ‘...every movement of people, object, lights and every noise’ renders the previously static architecture of the theatre unstable (Fischer-Lichte 2006: 107). The sites and stages of The Everyman and Playhouse – the buildings and their histories – have a pre-existing symbolism and identity through their reputations in the city. It is the transforming of these spaces by scenography that allows them to present new and diverse meanings.

In *Space in Performance, Making Meaning in Theatre* (1999), Gay McAuley argues that space of performance is ‘not an empty container; it shapes what goes on within it’ (1999: 41). Contextualised by a thorough breakdown as to how space has been characterised in previous writings on performance (ibid, pp.17-35), McAuley draws a distinction between ‘theatre space’ and ‘dramatic space’ (ibid, p. 19), with the first being the architecture and largely fixed geometry of the theatre itself, and the second as being ‘...always “multiple, divided, built on oppositions”’ created within the first (ibid).⁸ She argues that it is the transformation of the theatre’s ‘physical space’ by the actor’s presence in conjunction with the scenography that enables it to be ‘presentational’ (ibid, p. 29). Through this transformation, spectators are presented with ‘fictional place’, defined as ‘places presented, represented or evoked offstage’ (ibid). Although McAuley is quick to assert the importance of the actor and text in facilitating this presentation (ibid, p. 32) she does acknowledge the

⁸ McAuley is here drawing on the definition first made by Wilfried Passow in ‘The Analysis of Theatrical Performance: The State of the Art’ (1981: 253) in *Poetics Today* 2(3). pp. 237-254.

importance of scenography. She states that theatre is moving towards a situation where the ‘visual component is dominant’ and the designer considered ‘a major force’ (ibid, pp. 77-79). McAuley’s exact terms are not used within this thesis, but the analysis echoes her logic as to the presentation of place through the scenographic manipulation of dramatic space.

1.2.6 Space and social geography

Before cinema, theatrical performance was key to our understanding of space, visually abstracted out of time. In the article ‘A Critique of Historio-Scenography: Space and Time in Joseph-François-Louis Grobert’s *De l’Exécution dramatique*’ (2015), Pannill Camp perceives that space is constructed by cultural conventions. He observes that in the theatre scenography ‘fabricates experiences in which space takes on specific qualities for masses of spectators’ (Camp 2015: 209). To understand how experiences of Liverpool are ‘fabricated’ by scenography on the city’s stages requires determining how space is constituted in this local context. To achieve this and to close the gap between examining local places as created onstage and their relation to those experienced in daily life, this research draws on discourses of space and place derived from social geography. This crossing over of theoretical ideas from social geography into scenography is relatively uncommon in theatre studies, and in taking this position, this research offers an alternative way of considering the political significance of space and place within scenography.

The manner in which the terms “space” and “place” are employed within this thesis stem from their use by social geographer Doreen Massey (1991, 1994, 2005). In particular, as I will discuss in more detail in 1.3.3, the analysis of space and place within the case studies is supported by Massey’s reflections in *For Space* (2005). In this text, Massey presents an

overarching description of space as being abstract and open, whilst the naming and purposing of space sees it become fixed and therefore ‘place’ (Massey 2005). I will show in 1.2.3 how she offers a framework for considering how Liverpool “space” is permanently under construction from a myriad of forces and opinions, turning it into Liverpool as “place”. In *Place: A Short Introduction* (2004), Tim Cresswell summarises how across social geography, the ‘abstract concept’ is understood in relation to place (Cresswell 2004: 8). He states that it is when ‘humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way...it becomes place’ (ibid, p. 10). This recalls Michel de Certeau’s assertion in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) that place is ‘practiced space’ produced through social interactions between the communities within it, and by its relationship to other demarcated places (de Certeau 1984: 171). In *Space, Place and Gender* (1994), Massey describes how these relationships involve an ‘...overlapping and interplaying of the sets of characteristics and connotations with which each is associated’ (Massey 1994: 2). The scrutinising of such ‘characteristics and connotations’ (ibid) as discernible through visual markers and symbolism present in scenography has proved key to the analysis of the case studies in this thesis and their presentation of a Liverpool sense of place.

Emily Orley’s article ‘Performing Place, Recalling Space: A Site-Specific Installation/Constellation in London (2010) illustrates how place is created at the meeting point of these characteristics and trajectories within a performance context. She takes the metaphor of constellation from Massey’s *Space, Place and Gender* (1994: 156) and *For Space* (2005: 141) to consider the relationship of place and time, and to frame her own scenographic art practice (Orley 2010: 3). Orley relates her site-specific installation at Camden People’s Theatre (CPT), entitled *Hampstead Road* (2008), to Massey’s conception of place. The installation acted as a scenographic intervention, transforming the space it occupied into a

constellation style arrangement, formed from suspended objects. Orley recalls Massey's language in *For Space* (2004) in describing *Hampstead Road*'s depiction of 'different times with links to different places [as a] thrown togetherness' (Orley 2010: 7). She demonstrates through Massey how the history and cultural associations of a place, in this case the CPT, can be drawn on as a resource. This research similarly considers the 'different sets of linkages' (Massey 1994: 156) that intersect within Liverpool, as producing a place 'made up of layers and layers' relating to 'both the local and to the wider world' (Orley 2010: 3). Orley's article relates Massey's rejection of identity and place as fixed and stable to the time-based nature of performance, and how the time-space compression of the present moment and space results in place (Massey 1994: 167). This is parallel to the conditions that constitute the theatrical event. Place and the theatrical event are 'irretrievably, here and now. It won't be the same "here" when it is no longer "now"' (Massey 2005: 139). The theatrical event of *Hampstead Road* for each visitor was 'a momentary sense' of being within the network of interrelations and histories that have produced the place of CPT (Orley 2010: 10). Orley's findings support her practice of making place-specific work that engages with a location's history without trying to limit or quantify it. This thesis draws from her article to consider how the moment of a theatrical event, scenographically constructed on stage, can create such a 'sense' of place and how an audience in Liverpool, looking at visualisations of Liverpool, are drawn into an active dynamic with the city and Scouse identities as they are represented. Their 'sense of place' (Massey 1994) is communicated through readable markers of Liverpool identity.

1.2.7 Place and identity

Discussions as to what constitutes Liverpool identity are reliant on understanding how the place, and the communities that reside within it, relate to places and people outside the city's borders. This also works in reverse, with those external to Liverpool projecting their imaginings onto the city and its inhabitants, which has an impact on how the city thinks of itself. In *For Space* (2005) Massey recognises all space as result of such 'interrelations' (Massey 2005: 10). From the connections and divisions present in its communities and geographical boundaries, Liverpool contains and produces diverse identities. The analysis of the case-study productions includes an examination of the ways this heterogeneity has been presented. It questions how the visualisation of Liverpool as place and of Liverpool communities on stage has, in some instances, limited and in others expanded understanding of those people and places. For example, productions such as *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008) (Chapter 3, Part 1) simplify multifaceted Liverpool identities, whilst those such as *Scrappers* (2013) (Chapter 6) question their boundaries.

Massey, in 'A Global Sense of Place' (1991), recognises how places can only be understood as distinct '...by relating that place to places beyond' (Massey 1991: 29). She considers Kilburn High Road in north London, as an example of a how such a locality does not have a 'coherent identity... a single sense of place' (ibid, p. 26). Instead, the 'global sense of place' (ibid) emerges through how varied communities experience it and relate it to those understood to be outside of it. This 'sense of place' is always unstable due to an increasingly interconnected world (ibid, p. 28). To define any place or person as 'local' in the context of globalisation is complex, especially when one acknowledges that all experiences said to be 'local' are entirely subjective (ibid, p. 29). Massey discusses in the aforementioned *Space*,

Place and Gender (1994) how connectivity destabilises local areas into no longer having such a static definition of what makes that place unique.⁹ This may result in a defensive reaction, ring-fencing something perceived to be specific about a place or culture in an act of preservation. Any such act is an attempt:

...to seek the identity of a place by laying claim to some particular moment/location in time-space when the definition of the area and the social relations dominant within it were to the advantage of that particular claimant group. (Massey 1994: 169)

The productions I examine in Chapters 3 and 4 I will show as ‘laying claim’ to ‘particular moment[s]/location[s] in time space’ which present a rose-tinted nostalgic view of Liverpool’s past. This nostalgia is built on false history that presupposes Liverpool was once populated by a coherent community; the ‘dominant’ (ibid) originators, as it were, of Liverpool identity. It is common for such local ‘desire for fixity... rootedness’ to be viewed as ‘romanticized [sic] escapism’ (Massey 1991:27). To want to remain local can be presented as wanting life to remain consistent, closed off from any outside influence. Cresswell echoes this in noting that local ‘struggles for place identity’ always risk appealing to ‘...parochial and exclusive forces of bigotry and nationalism’ (Cresswell 2004: 27). In her article ‘Space-time and the Politics of Location’ (2000), Massey argues that the local need not be assumed to be narrow minded or closed off. The familiar inevitably begets nostalgia (Massey 2000: 52) of the type that has seen Liverpool labelled as inclined to insularity and sentimentalism. These accusations emanate from Liverpool’s often fierce demonstrations of

⁹ Massey uses the example of the hostility felt by the residents of London’s Isle of Dogs to changes in the area caused by the influx of new inhabitants; many of whom were from a higher socio-economic status than the original occupants. This contributed to a battle for identity over the area with the new inhabitants taking on the re-branding of the area as ‘The Docklands’ and current residents reacting with championing the un-gentrified districts as ‘the real Isle of Dogs’ (Massey 1994: 168).

civic pride. The city is frequently self-referential in its cultural output. Resistance to possible outside instigated change can manifest in a retreat into the security of the familiar and known. The presentation of Liverpool identities and place by scenography frequently draws on familiar landmarks, flags or maps. The experience of seeing the familiar on stage may see audiences' conceptions of that symbol, or the identity or place associated with it confirmed or, conversely destabilised and contradicted.

1.2.8 Liverpool cultural identity

Chapter 2 contains a more in-depth consideration of some of the principal symbols and traits associated with Liverpool cultural identity and its derivative, Scouse. This includes detailing how the latter is used within this thesis, as this colloquial term has very different connotations inside and outside of the city. The use of Scouse in this thesis is marked by its capitalisation. This is to prevent any confusion with its frequent use as a derogatory slur, especially when employed by people not from Liverpool. For the same reason, the appellation "scouser" is not used as it is rarely employed with positive connotations outside of the city.

The identification and definition of the discussed tangible images and intangible qualities of Liverpool and Scouse identity necessitated a consultation of texts about the city and its socio-historical context. The most valuable of these works were those that considered Liverpool as having a distinct character, including the works of John Belchem (1996, 2007, 2008, 2009) and Tony Crowley's *Scouse: A Social and Cultural History* (2012). Papers by Phillip Boland including 'The Construction of Images of People and Place: Labelling Liverpool and Stereotyping Scousers' (2008) and 'Sonic geography, place, and race in the formation

of local identity: Liverpool and Scousers' (2010), have also been helpful in considering the social and cultural rather than geographical boundaries of the identity.

The construction of Liverpool identity in the global and national context has not been entirely conditioned from inside of the city. This thesis links the presentation of identity in the case studies to how the city, its culture and its inhabitants have been previously portrayed in media and entertainment, whose intended audience is primarily outside of the city. Liverpool histories including Belchem's *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History* (2006) and Mike Benbough-Jackson and Sam Davies' *Merseyside: Culture and Place* (2011) reflect on how this portrayal has frequently been negative, or mockingly disparaging of Liverpool issues. The harmful consequences this portrayal has on Liverpool's national and global reputation is central to Paula Skidmore's unpublished paper 'A Dangerous City? The Historical Image of Liverpool (1990).¹⁰ Skidmore outlines how the reporting of lawbreaking and tragedies in Liverpool by the national media has frequently been sensationalist (Skidmore 1990: 55). This has painted a false image of Liverpool as dangerous and having an unusually high crime rate, despite this proving false when compared to other cities of a similar size (ibid). The noticeable prejudice appears to be rooted in the city's past troubles, as examined in more detail in Chapter 2, including mass unemployment after the decline of the docks (Boland 2008). Roger Hill argues in his chapter 'The Revolution will not be Dramatised' (2011) that rather than the news media, it is the depiction of Liverpool in popular culture that has principally led to its demonisation. He suggests that the ways the city and its inhabitants have been portrayed in TV dramas

¹⁰ This paper was produced as part of Skidmore's work (1989) within the research group, purposed to examine the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, at Edge Hill University's Centre for Studies in Crime and Social Justice. This unpublished paper was incorporated into *Hillsborough and After: The Liverpool Experience: First Report of The Hillsborough Project*. (1990).

particularly has cemented common Liverpool and Scouse stereotypes (Hill 2011: 88). Many of these stereotypes, as further detailed in Chapter 2, can be seen in the costumes of the case study productions including *Urban Legend* (2004) (Chapter 5) and *Scrappers*, sometimes utilised for comedic effect, and at other times to critique or undermine their negative associations.

Raymond Boyle's PhD thesis *Football and Cultural Identity in Glasgow and Liverpool* (1995) highlights a very different activity to theatre but his observations are relevant to thinking about the link between Liverpool cultural identity and entertainment. From the focus groups Boyle interviewed for his research, he concludes that it is 'evident that there exists among many of the people who live in the city a perception that it is a city unfairly represented in the media' (Boyle 1995: 156). The city's struggle to be taken seriously in the face of such apparent bias is also covered in Franco Bianchini's chapter 'Liverpool: A Tale of Missed Opportunities?' in his edited collection *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration* (1994). Bianchini concludes his chapter with the disclaimer 'it has been easy to disprove the sneers that Liverpool itself was bereft of high culture although factual argument may not amend prejudices' (Bianchini 1994: 171). These works demonstrate how the perception of Liverpool at national levels, has often outweighed the 'facts' (ibid) of its socio-economic political situation, as well as the opinions and experiences of those who actually live there

Scouse as a descriptor of identity is frequently employed in histories of Liverpool including by Belchem in *Irish, Catholic and Scouse* (2007) and *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History* (2006: 177), and by Crowley (2012). For something or someone to be Scouse is not related solely to being from or existing within Merseyside. Instead Scouse can be understood as a performative identity that constructs a community through shared symbols, morals,

character traits and narratives. The most instantly recognisable of these traits is the Scouse ‘voice’ the inflection, slang and particularly emotive style of expression strongly associated with Liverpool inhabitants (Crowley 2012: 24). Boland (2010) classifies this ‘performative accent’ as the primary signifier of Scouse identity (Boland 2010: 17). Referring to it as ‘performative’ (ibid) is not to suggest that the accent is falsified. Instead, Boland explains that it has become a recognised ‘identifier’ that allows a cross section of Liverpool communities to differentiate themselves from surrounding areas of Lancashire (ibid, p. 22). Although speech and aurality are largely outside the remit of this thesis, it should be noted that the Scouse voice is present and utilised in some form in all of the case studies.

However, it is not solely voice that determines Scouse identity and Scouse-ness. Though Crowley’s text (2012) is essentially a ‘historic-linguistic’ study (Crowley 2012: xv), his comprehensive analysis of the relationship of Scouse identity to a sense of place informs my analysis of its scenographic representation. Crowley (2012) outlines how Scouse has come to stand for working class Liverpool communities who see themselves as the truly authentic, valid citizens of the city. In this, Crowley determines that Scouse has become a performed identity: ‘for purposes ranging from self-identification, solidarity, irony or even ridicule’ (ibid 2012: 68). Chapter 2 will examine how this multi-purposed performed identity has been similarly wielded with wide-ranging intentions, from comedy in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* to social commentary in *Unprotected* in a theatrical context. This examination will also refer to Barrett’s aforementioned PhD thesis (2016) which demonstrated how ‘scouse-ness’ (Barrett 2016: 226) can be understood as style of performance that embodies the language, stories and humour associated with Liverpool’s working class.

This thesis considers Scouse as a community and identity determined by factors other than its geography. In order to analyse how this identity has been presented on stage through scenography requires an unpicking of what unified Scouse identities. In a city as heterogeneous as Liverpool, Scouse identities form imagined bonds that lead to a strong sense of kinship, the theatricalisation of which is observable in productions such as *The Way Home* (2006) and *Hope Place* (2014) (Chapter 4). The ideas laid out in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006),¹¹ first published in 1983, have been useful in understanding how Liverpool, and especially Scouse identities create a 'national consciousness' (Anderson 2006: 37). This 'consciousness' (ibid) is based on individuals recognising that they share commonalities (e.g. ideologies, culture) with those they have never met in person (ibid, p. 6). This allows those individuals to build an 'imagined nation' (ibid, p. 30), which may be felt as strongly as one dictated by physical boundaries. The advantages for this research of understanding Scouse as an 'imagined community' (ibid) are examined in more detail in 1.3. However, this approach is not unproblematic, especially when it comes to aligning it with theatre practice. Considering Scouse as an imagined community supports the notion that the identity is spread and shared through cultural products, including theatre, yet these cultural products should not be assumed to be entirely authored from within, that is, completely produced under controls set by that community. Harvie, in *Staging the UK* (2005) cautions that referring to a community as 'imagined' suggests that it has the 'individual agency to pursue the creative practice we [the community] want in order to produce the national identities we want.' (2005: 16). This ignores how identities and their presentation in theatrical productions are constricted by financial and political restraints bestowed from central government or global forces (ibid, p. 18). This prevents the theatres from ever

¹¹ Anderson's text was first published in 1983. The edition referred to in this thesis is Anderson, B. (2006) *Imagined Communities*. 3rd rev. edn. London and New York: Verso.

having absolute independent agency regarding their visualisations of their local city, communities and identities. An awareness of the external restrictions that may have shaped the theatres' outputs must be kept in mind when considering how the Scouse imagined community and Liverpool are depicted in scenography at The Everyman and Playhouse.

Rolando Munck's edited collection *Reinventing the City: Liverpool in Comparative Perspective* (2003) examines how national and local perceptions have formed Liverpool's identity, in particular how it markets itself in the global arena. In his introduction, Munck rejects the idea that Liverpool should resist the homogenizing forces of globalism by closing itself down¹² to outside influence. Instead he argues that the city should embrace a 'glocalist' outlook, 'intermingling' local and global dynamisms to shape Liverpool's identity and lived experience (Munck 2003: 6). He contends that in recent times Liverpool's focus has been on making the city 'work in the interests of those "out there"', rather than focusing on the well-being of those "in here"' (ibid). Considering Made in Liverpool work as aiming to produce meanings and proliferate impressions of the city from such a glocalist perspective gives the productions more complex objectives than thinking of them solely in opposition to the national and global. To be local is reframed, not as closed, but as offering new ways of managing to affect and bring into being national and global politics from inside, that is from within Liverpool.

Glocalism is a term rarely used in theatre studies and the way it informs this thesis requires clarification.¹³ Munck's use of glocalism correlates with Roland Robertson's explanation of

¹² The tendency for Liverpool to shut itself off from outside influences and engage in defiant resistance is covered in *Liverpool: City of Radicals* (2011).

¹³ A notable exception is a 2009 special edition of the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, XXIII (2) which includes an editorial by Evan Darwin Winet titled 'Between "Global-locality" and "Subversive Affirmation"' (pp. 40 -47) where he defines glocal as 'the

the term in his chapter Glocalization [sic]: Time-Space and Homogeneity – Heterogeneity’ (1995). Robertson defines glocalism as the fusing of local and global cultures, usually intended to tailor the global to appeal more to local consumers (Robertson 1995: 25-41). This could be seen as a watering down of local particularities, however, Robertson later refutes this in his introduction to *European Glocalization in Global Context* (2014) claiming that glocalism actually resists globalist standardization and in fact, creates a ‘space for difference’ (Robertson 2014: 18). Made in Liverpool productions have the capacity to create such spaces ‘for difference’ in showing how the local has not been flattened by outside forces but has resisted and adapted those influences for its own purposes. This can be observed in how productions visualised local perspectives on national politics such as the government’s legislation on sex work in *Unprotected* (2006) (Chapter 6) and the decline of manual industries in *Scrappers*. However, such a fusion of the global and the local in the theatre can be problematic. As a regional theatre complex, The Everyman and Playhouse are subject to funding decisions made in London, and so have to seek approval by staging work seen to be relevant not just within but beyond the city (1.2.1).

1.2.9 Context and histories of The Everyman and Playhouse

This thesis concentrates on productions between 2004 and 2015 at The Everyman and Playhouse. The case studies all occurred after the theatres’ amalgamation in 2003, and under the directorship of Gemma Bodinetz (artistic director) and Deborah Aydon (executive director). The theatres, however, have distinct identities as a result of their

adaption of elements of global culture to serve the specific contexts and exigencies of local communities and cultural traditions.’ (Winet 2009: 43). However, neither Winet nor any of the other articles included in this edition of the journal address scenography, or what is seen on the stages of the glocal productions discussed.

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individual histories, past status and reputations within the city and the way this has informed the ways that they are thought of within Liverpool and beyond, is recounted in Chapter 2. Understanding these formative histories involved the consultation of a number of texts on theatre in the city, as well as examining documents and interviews available in The Everyman archive and Playhouse collection at Liverpool Central Library (see Methodology, 1.4). In this, Harold Ackroyd's *The Liverpool Stage* (1996) has been particularly useful as it covers the history of The Everyman and Playhouse within the context of the city's other theatres, up to the mid-1990s. Ackroyd's 'gazetteer' (p.11) presents a detailed, illustrated overview of Liverpool theatres and music halls that have opened in the city from 1750 (The Drury Lane Theatre) to 1980 (the Unity).

Ackroyd shows theatre-going to have long been a popular pastime in Liverpool. At the time of writing, the city has six producing and touring theatres within walking distance of its centre as well as numerous renowned independent companies and arts organisations including The Invisible Wind Factory, the Liverpool Lantern Company and the art and performance collective Assemble. The four other (excluding the Playhouse and The Everyman) theatres are: the Royal Court (previously Cooke's New Circus, established in 1826), the Empire (previously New Prince of Wales Theatre, established 1896), the Epstein Theatre (previously The Neptune, established 1913) and the Unity (previously the Merseyside Unity Theatre Company, established 1980). Having an overview of these theatres through associated publications and academic scrutiny has been beneficial in contextualising The Everyman and Playhouse and situating them within the city. The Empire, a grand touring venue which focuses on concerts and popular musicals, and the Epstein, which caters predominantly to local theatre groups, have received little academic attention. The Unity's history as a socialist-leaning, working-class producing theatre has

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been studied in Jerry Dawson's *Left Theatre: Merseyside Unity Theatre* (1985). The Royal Court Theatre and its audiences are the subject of Barrett's previously cited PhD (2016). She explores how the theatre's hyper-local focus, with its programme of often revived shows, and working-class audiences, have seen the Royal Court theatre often dismissed by national critics (Barrett 2016: 210). In Chapter 2, I will elaborate on how Barrett's overviews of the profiles of Liverpool theatre audiences (ibid, pp. 134-141) was also helpful to this research.

Returning to the two theatres considered in this thesis, the founding of the Playhouse is recounted in Grace Wyndham Goldie's *The Liverpool Repertory Theatre 1911- 1934* (1935), with its more recent narrative history covered in Pelham McMahon and Pam Brooks' *An Actor's Place* (2000). Doreen Tanner's *Everyman: The First Ten Years* (1974) performs a similar function to Wyndham Goldie's text in relating the formation and early establishment of The Everyman. Though none of these works discuss the scenography of the theatres in any depth, Tanner's reflection on The Everyman's first decade (1964 to 1974) recognises how the theatre's space was integral to the evolution of the radical 'Everyman style' (Tanner 1974: 35). She celebrates how the work that was produced from the 'ramshackle... inadequate' space was felt to be especially authentic (ibid, p. 2). The theatre's design aesthetic was purposefully stark; avoiding 'the glitter and tinsel business' (ibid, p. 4). Tanner's comments are of interest to this contemporary research as they suggest The Everyman as having had a past house style, rather than its past austere aesthetic being solely a matter of financial necessity.

The histories of The Everyman and Playhouse as compiled by Merkin have been fundamental to this research. Her *Liverpool's Third Cathedral: The Liverpool Everyman Theatre*

(2004) and *Liverpool Playhouse: a theatre and its city* (2011) represent Merkin's thorough excavation of The Everyman and Playhouse archives and offer the only up-to-date, comprehensive timelines of the theatres' past productions. The publications are presented as 'scrapbook' compilations of the theatres' stories in the 'words of those who were, and are, there' (Merkin 2014: cover). Both texts were produced as commemorative books: *Liverpool's Third Cathedral* published in conjunction with The Everyman's 40th anniversary and *Liverpool Playhouse* a hundred years from the Playhouse's opening in 1911. Merkin includes reflections from those who worked at the theatres, alongside reports, reviews and photographs of the buildings and past productions, with little commentary. This allows for the reader to build their own impressions, creating an essential resource for researchers examining the theatres' historiography. Merkin's own interpretations can be discerned in her chapter 'Liverpool' in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History* (2012: 91-103). In this she uses examples from The Everyman and Playhouse to argue for the importance of examination of regional theatre histories. She states that recognising the complexity and specificity of local regional theatres and their relationship to their communities is vital in combatting the tendency of theatre historians to generalise these local narratives. This thesis expands on the ground laid down by Merkin by including the role of scenography in the maintenance of these relationships, and presentation of local culture and identity.

1.2.10 Summary and identification of the contribution to knowledge

A review of the literature from the seemingly diverse areas covered by this thesis has uncovered several gaps in knowledge which are at least partially addressed by this research. Regional theatre has been examined in terms of its local and national economic and political context and impact (Jackson and Rowell, 1984, Dorney and Merkin 2010) but has

not been studied in any depth in terms of its scenography. Instead, work relating to scenography and the visualisation of identity has largely been either focussed on national identities (O’Gorman 2014) or London-centric (Armstrong 2010). This thesis expands on the arguments made by Armstrong and O’Gorman, that scenography has political and social agency, by considering it within a regional theatre context.

This thesis recognises the configuration of space (Howard 2002, Collins and Nisbet 2010) as an integral component of scenography. It builds on work that has demonstrated how theatrical space is converted by performance into representations of place/s (McAuley 1999) by focusing on the crucial role of scenography in this process. Further, it expands consideration of this transformation to Liverpool itself, examining how the space of the city becomes understood as place by daily experience (Cresswell 2004, Massey 2005) and how this is represented in cultural productions including theatre. This position understands the city as established through social interrelations rather than geography, making examination of its theatrical visualisation more complex. Analysing the case studies therefore not only seeks to identify physical images and symbols of Liverpool cultural identity, such as maps or known buildings, but also conceptual identifiers such as character traits commonly associated with Scouse-ness (Crowley 2012). In this, the thesis acknowledges that Liverpool and Scouse cultural identity are layered. They encompass the city’s socio-political history (Belchem 2008) and its daily experience (Boland 2010) and how it has been depicted in the news (Skidmore 1990) and in entertainment (Hill 2011) media. Though this has previously been considered in terms of theatre by Barrett (2016), this thesis marks the first major investigation into the interrelationship between the production of Liverpool identity and what is seen on two of its major theatres’ stages. The histories of these theatres, The Everyman and Playhouse, and their relationships with the local community have been

previously investigated by Wyndham Goldie (1935), Tanner (1964) and Merkin (2003, 2011). This research is the first to consider scenography as central to these relationships and the image the theatres wanted to portray of themselves within the city and beyond as cultural institutions. It repositions scenography, not as a by-product of theatrical production, but as central to how those productions were perceived, and how this fed back into wider conceptions of Liverpool identity.

1.3 Theoretical context

This thesis considers the scenography of Made in Liverpool works as having particular significance to the city's wider cultural identity. As new writing that spotlighted Liverpool and in some cases, broader northwest themes, the productions drew on local and national politics. The experience of being in Liverpool, its historic identity and the character and cultures of its inhabitants has been represented in different, often contradictory ways by those with first-hand, local knowledge and by those imposing their views from outside the city. Liverpool identity is multifaceted, layered and disputed due to conflicting conceptions of the city and engrained stereotypes that exist nationally and locally. Shared cultural practices as the basis of the city's identity/ies are more pertinent to this thesis than historical or geographical foundations; practices built on mutually recognised lived experience rather than physical geography alone.

In staging Liverpool and local identities, the theatres are forced to confront whose histories and experiences of the city should be given priority. In doing so, The Everyman and Playhouse are occupied with what Elin Diamond in *Performance and Cultural Politics* (1996) calls 'a complex matrix of power, serving diverse cultural desires' (Diamond 1996: 2).

Diverse and frequently contradictory views as to what represents an authentic depiction of the city and local people can be observed in the conflicting reception to the case studies on local and nationally published platforms. The theatres are forced to find a balance between fulfilling both local and national expectations, the second being necessary to maintain funding. My analysis of the 12 case studies that constitute the body of this thesis clarifies Diamond's 'complex matrix' (ibid), alongside articulating how scenography actively contributes to the plays' meanings. In order to achieve this, I consider the design of each production from three distinct but interconnected theoretical lenses: scenography, cultural identity and social geography.

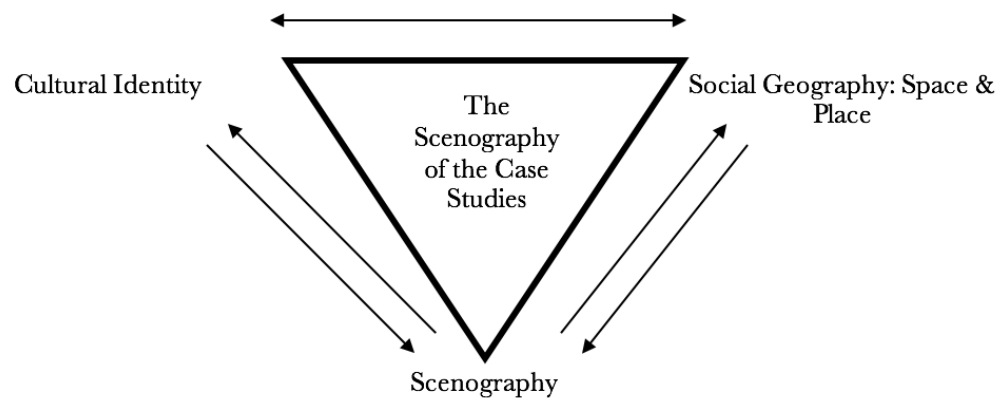


Fig 1. Considering Design within Triangulation of Theories

In my diagram above, I outline how these three lenses relate to and influence each other before setting out in more detail the theoretical context of each one. I reiterate that within this thesis, scenography is understood both as an overarching practice and as a theoretical discourse (detailed further in 1.3.1) applied to the final visual presentation of the productions. Therefore, in my diagram, it is the practice and discourse of scenography that is informed by the cultural identity and social geography of Liverpool. In turn, those aspects are informed by scenography that includes visualisations of the city and its

inhabitants. The final designs of the case studies represent in themselves a cultural product that feeds back into how the social geography and cultural identity of Liverpool is constructed outside of the theatre. Scenography is therefore actively knowledge producing, recreating a Liverpool as known to local and non-local audiences, and visualising alternative versions of the city, from different perspectives.

1.3.1 Scenography

Approaching the representation of Liverpool identity on stage through scenography, rather than through texts, focuses on the visual, spatial meanings created and disseminated by productions specific to Liverpool at a particular moment in time. Such readings of scenography have struggled against an assumed hierarchy imposed by the long-standing supposition that drama is a literary practice and that ultimate authorship lies in the text. However, it is the visual, spatial aspect of production that constitutes the event of theatrical performance, rather than what is derived from a written text. The text on which a performance is based has a material presence outside of the theatrical event whilst scenography and dramaturgy are not only unique to the space within which they are happening but also to the time. My analytical approach takes the visual component of productions to be an active, collaborative element created in a dynamic exchange with the space, time and cultural-political context in which it occurs.

The staging of the city explicitly concerns the theatricalisation of Liverpool space and place, yet scenography is also in itself a spatial practice. Though site-specific strategies have

been used historically by The Everyman and Playhouse,¹⁴ and employed within the marketing of some of the productions considered (Chapter 3, Part 1), all the case studies examined for this research were building based. The three stages considered in this research: The Everyman and Playhouse auditoria and the flexible space of the Playhouse Studio are typically organised as thrust or end-on spaces which have clear delineations as to the space occupied by the audience, and the fictional space as created by the performance. However, being confined to their seats in the auditorium does not necessarily render the audiences' engagement with scenography as passive. In 'Thinking that Matters: Towards a Post-Anthropocentric Approach to Performance Design' (2017), Maaïke Bleeker explains how recognising scenography as active identifies its capacity to make meaning autonomously from the text and direction. She states that 'it is not the drama that gives meaning to matter but design through which matter comes to matter' (Bleeker 2017:125). In this understanding scenography is no longer considered a supportive component of performance, there can be no separation of the materiality of design and its signification.

The visualisation and interpretation of known places and familiar faces to communicate facets of Liverpool experience prompts local audiences to scrutinise their own assumptions and beliefs as to those experiences. Bleeker recognises that by unravelling scenography and its impact, the researcher can better understand the wider conditions that shape not only local but also national opinions. She explains how:

This may contribute to understanding why particular viewers would be willing to take up this point of view and recognise the vision presented as 'how it is', but may

¹⁴ Including *Murder in the Cathedral* (1964) which was performed inside Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, and *Scouse* (1997) which included a flash mobbing of Liverpool's radio tower.

also explain why other viewers feel disorientated, alienated or displaced by particular ways of showing. (Bleeker 2011: 10)

Bleeker recognises scenography's 'ways of showing' inevitably do not achieve unanimous agreement as accurate or inclusive. In observing the varied critical responses as to what and what does not qualify a design as having authentically represented a Liverpool place, culture or identity, I have attempted to uncover the unconscious bias and predispositions held nationally and locally. This illuminates the difficulty faced by the theatres as to whose experience of the city they prioritise.

1.3.2 Cultural identity

The city of Liverpool has a strong, historic cultural identity, commonly promoted by locals as unique. This identity has been important to its tourist economy and formed the basis of the city's depiction in popular culture and subsequently its wider reputation. In her chapter 'The Role of National Theatres in an Age of Globalization' (2008),¹⁵ Janelle Reinelt writes as to how culture promoted by national theatres has become an alternative product by which to establish and define countries in an increasingly globalised market. Her assertion that 'nations market cultural products in the global arena' is here applied to the ways in which Liverpool theatre helps to market the city nationally and beyond (Reinelt 2008: 232). Liverpool theatres, in promoting the city's cultural identity, are caught between the tension of needing to incorporate specific local familiarity and appeal globally.

In 1.2.8 I signposted publications that have detailed how the social and economic history of the city has impacted on the formation of Liverpool and Scouse identity. How the city has

¹⁵ In Wilmer, S.E. ed. (2008) *National Theatres in Changing Europe*. pp. 228 -239.

been viewed, and how it views itself, can be understood as having affected its theatrical visualisation. Liverpool has a reputation of setting itself apart as different from the rest of the UK, as the popular football chant proclaims, “We’re not English, We’re Scouse”.¹⁶ In his chapter ‘Forms of the World: Roots, Histories and Horizons of the Glocal’ (2014),¹⁷ Franciscu Sedda draws the distinction between communities driven to protect what they perceive as their uniqueness from globalisation, and those who are open to global influence but prioritise their own perspective and needs. The first action risks a community becoming overly insular and blinkered - accusations frequently lobbed at Liverpool’s predilection for making work about itself (Chapter 2). Sedda’s second action recalls observations made by Munck that Liverpool should make the forces of globalisation work for its own needs (Munck 2003: 6). This can be inferred in case studies where local politics engage with global discourses (Chapter 6). Recognising Made in Liverpool work as significant beyond its local context appreciates the city’s identity as distinct and frequently inward-looking, whilst simultaneously acknowledging this is not necessarily a limitation.

In 1.2.8 I discussed how Scouse has been widely used with reference to Liverpool distinctiveness, which will be expanded in Chapter 2. The characterising of Scouse as a marked subdivision of the Liverpool community is a fictive concept. To describe a person, behaviour, place or symbol as Scouse does not refer to any unified identity that can be quantifiably measured, such as all residing within an agreed boundary or subject to a shared authority or belief system. Rather, Scouse can be understood as an imagined community as described by Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (2006). In his text, Anderson points to the dissemination of literature in the common tongue by the printing press as

¹⁶ See Devaney 2011: 174 and Crowley 2012: 136.

¹⁷ In Robertson, R. ed. (2014) *European Glocalization in Global Context*. pp. 35 -62.

having led to individuals imagining and building connections with people they had never met in person. Being able to read the same works as these people, previously thought of as strangers to their communities, led to recognition of shared common practices, ideologies and behaviours (Anderson 2006: 31). Such shared understanding of the world allows individuals to collectively ‘think nation’ (ibid, p .22). Anderson states that it is not uncommon for ‘imagined communities’ to articulate their sense of nationalism, based on social practices and conceived ‘comradeship’ through cultural outputs including literature and dress (ibid, p.22, 7). Scouse, considered as such an imagined community can be understood as self-defined by individuals who share cultural capital, social norms and everyday practices. It is a logical step to extend the expression of this imagined Scouse communal identity through cultural products to theatre practice.

Munck asserts that since its decline as a vital port and centre of industry, Liverpool has found itself ‘decentred’ (Munck 2003: 5). Due to no longer having a ‘global role’, the city and its port lack a ‘unifying focus’ which has resulted in residents having an embedded ‘us against them’ mentality (ibid, pp. 5- 6). Considering this entrenched defensiveness, it may seem counterproductive that the theatres should frequently concentrate on negative visualisations that seem to confirm a national bias (Chapter 5). Liverpool has been repeatedly caricatured and besmirched in tabloid media as a city of crime, poverty and violence (Boland 2008, Hill 2011). However, concealing these undesirable aspects of Liverpool life would be to erase the lived experience of some local people, who express frustration with rose-tinted depictions of Liverpool life (Chapter 3, Part 2 and Chapter 4). Such depictions are seen to ignore ‘the economic and culture realities of the city, the scenes of unemployment poverty, gangs, crime’ (Boland 2010: 640). Although Liverpool theatres should be well placed to visualise these facets of their own city, I will show how they often

appear to be swayed by televisual stereotypes and entrenched negative imagery from the press. My analysis traces how this stereotyping of Liverpool and its local communities has emerged as a visual shorthand on stage, with recognisable features depicting the “harsh reality” of life in the city reappearing across different designs.

Though Liverpool no longer makes substantial global connections and impact through trade and/or manufacture, it has significant, far-reaching output and influence in higher education,¹⁸ sport, music and popular culture. The cultural output of Liverpool has become the principal way that the city is known nationally and globally, through its galleries, museums, music, football teams, writers, performers and portrayal on stage and screen. Munck (2003) describes how the city’s identity is formed by the overlaps and contradictions of national, global and local references.

Liverpool as we know it, live it and (re)present it, is constructed historically, socially and publicly but also discursively in films, plays and TV and newspaper reports about the city region (Munck 2003:14)

Liverpool’s cultural output, including theatre, is created and perceived by those outside of the city largely through mediated images. The dominance and longevity of certain images, and narratives, produces a hierarchy whereupon some Liverpool and Scouse identities are perceived as more authentic. What constitutes “authentic” differs in global, national and local opinion. This is reinforced by having certain depictions being repeatedly visualised as part of the city’s cultural output, including theatre. These images inform understanding of

¹⁸ Liverpool has a comparably high student population due to the concentration of universities (Liverpool, Liverpool Hope, LIPA, Liverpool John Moores and Edge Hill) and their purpose-built accommodation in Liverpool’s city centre.

how Liverpool identities and notions of Liverpool as place are constructed from within and how these constructions relate to people and places beyond the city.

1.3.3 Social geography: Space and Place

As I laid out in 1.2.6, I refer to Massey, especially *For Space* (2005) and the way she conceives space as becoming a specific, fixed place through interrelations, mutually constructed between those within the place's boundaries and with those considered outside of its borders (Massey 2005: 10). Her writing on how space is experienced has been key to my understanding of how Liverpool identity is based on shared culture as well as location.

In *Geography Matters!* (1984), she describes the move by human geography scholars from 'systematic geography' (Massey 1984: 5) – examining data such as per capita wealth or population – to a more integrated study where multiple tangible and intangible elements are understood as contributing to the definition of place. This includes recognising those places and their inhabitants as specific, with their own capacity to respond and adapt to national and global politics instead of being passive recipients. To understand local places as produced by outside effects is to oversimplify, seeing only part of the picture, and fails, as Massey observes, to 'adequately explain what is happening at particular moments or in particular places' (Massey 1984: 9). Liverpool incorporates layers of happenings and connections, both global and local. It is, as Munck summarises, 'not just a place on the map: it is a site of power, difference and contestation' (Munck 2003: 7). Comprehending a region's distinction requires an understanding of its social divisions, symbolism and markers of identity. Liverpool's particularity can thus only be comprehended by space as 'a

social construct’ rather than something that can be gauged using units of measurement (Massey 1984: 3).

Massey’s work on spatiality derives from the spatial politics of Henri Lefebvre, whose *Production of Space* (1992) frames Armstrong’s argument (2010). In the literature review I drew attention to how this enquiry builds on Armstrong’s work on identity and scenography at the National Theatre by considering local identity as visualised at a regional theatre complex. Armstrong connects Lefebvre’s (1992) theoretical text on space to writings on scenography by designer Jaroslav Malina (Armstrong 2010: 41). She details how Lefebvre’s spatial triad offers a blueprint whereby the spatiality of scenography and the intentions of the designer involved can be analysed. This research echoes Armstrong’s application of Lefebvre’s writing to scenography, as ‘composed “theatrical space”’ (ibid, p. 48), and as space produced to be read, but it differs from her enquiry in that it does not engage with the designers’ process. Instead my focus is on the scenographic representation of Liverpool, as lived and imagined, as experienced in the moment of production and evaluated in reviews, rather than tracing the development of the designer through detailed analysis of model boxes, drawings and discussions.

Although Liverpool understood as place carries associations of ‘coherence’, ‘home’ ‘nationalism and ‘static identities’ (Massey 1994: 168). The relationship of the city and its local identities, to the rest of the UK and the outside world, is constantly undergoing change. I consider how, in the re-appropriating or reinforcing of diverse and fluctuating visualisations of Liverpool as place, the presentation of Liverpool scenographically has the potential to alter the lived experience and practice of the city for those for whom it is a daily reality and those who view it as a cultural phenomenon from outside.

1.3.4 Conclusion

Visual realisations of Liverpool and local identities on its stages through the changing of space into place by scenography reveal ideologies that inform the city's cultural identity. As such, these visualisations have political and social implications as to how the city is perceived. Scenography can either support or undermine these perceptions. Visualisations of Liverpool, in Liverpool theatres, have the potential to challenge and even alter how the city is interpreted and understood at local, national and global levels. The bringing together of scenography, cultural identity and discourses on space and place drawn from social geography offers a critical framework for a close reading of the way Liverpool is represented through set and costume design, and the organisation of space on the city's stages.

1.4 Methodology

The interdisciplinary nature of this enquiry, as identified through reviewing the relevant literature necessitated a bricolage of methods. In this section, I detail the three principal methods by which I garnered information on the selected case study from The Everyman and Playhouse. The three approaches were archival research, interviews with designers and the examination of responses to productions in newspapers and online platforms. The Everyman and Playhouse have two archives dedicated to their past productions: however, for reasons detailed in 1.4.1, these were not sufficient to fulfil the needs of this research. This thesis is concerned primarily with how each of the case studies was potentially read in the moment of performance, and thus gaining an understanding of their reception through reviews and blog posts was crucial.

In addition to these methods and their related sources detailed below, I also saw three of the twelve case productions myself. I personally observed *Scrappers*, *Hope Place* and *Narvik* (2015). Having already embarked on the initial research for this thesis, I anticipated that they would be relevant to my enquiry and so took detailed notes whilst the productions were still fresh in my mind. All of the case studies in this thesis were premieres of new writing and so the play scripts were not published before the opening night, when they were integrated into the plays' programmes and released.¹⁹ This raises the issue of the authorship of stage directions and setting instructions. Across the case studies, the published directions as to how the stage should be set up, the appearance of the characters and details of props closely corresponds with what was seen on stage. It is impossible to know for certain which of these directions were authored by the playwright and which were the result of decisions made by the designer. At the time of writing, only *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Narvik*, had been produced, in very different designs, again since their original runs in Liverpool.²⁰ This makes it difficult to judge how much the designs of these first productions and their stage directions, shaped future stagings.

Another factor in deciding upon the multi-strand methodology of this thesis was the possibility that The Everyman and Playhouse archives gave precedence to preserving material that reflected positively on their history and their achievements. This made complete reliance on the archive inadvisable. In his article 'Historical Archives, Events and

¹⁹ With the exception of *Eric's*, *Scrappers* and *Narvik* which, at the time of writing, have yet to be published.

²⁰ *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* was staged at the Union Theatre, London in 2010. This was a fringe version of the original production (directed again by Phil Willmott) with Charlie Cridlan's set restricted to free standing letters spelling out 'Adelphi'. Box of Tricks theatre company adapted *Narvik* to tour (31 January – 25 March 2017) with a new design by Katie Scott that employed a climbing-frame style structure reminiscent of metal pipework.

Facts: History writing as fragmentary performance' (2002), Michal Kobińska warns that the perceived documentary function of archives often sees them endowed with a false sense of authority. He argues that what is preserved and what is discarded is always curated and can therefore never be deemed to be without bias (Kobińska 2002: 7). Researchers should therefore always aim for their work to not be totally dependent upon what is available in the archive, but to construct their findings from a diverse range of sources (ibid, p. 9). This has particular resonance to studies of scenographic histories, as archives have rarely prioritised material relating to the design or technical side of performance. Through substantiating archive findings with other sources, I was able to make informed speculations as to the appearances, contexts and impacts of the case-studies' scenography.

1.4.1 Archives

The material that forms the basis of this research was gathered from three Liverpool archives. The most essential of these was The AHRC Everyman archive, held at Liverpool John Moores University. The archive was deposited at the university in 2004, whereupon it was augmented by interviews conducted by Merkin, with important figures from the theatre's history. The archive also temporarily holds deposits of material relating to the Playhouse. This material is box listed, but not archived, before being transferred to the Playhouse's archive at Liverpool Central Library. This archive is largely uncatalogued and covers material relating to the theatre from 1911 to 1990. I consulted material relating to *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* whilst it was held at The Everyman archive and this is noted in the bibliography. I also visited the Playhouse's archive at Liverpool Central Library in order to provide context as to the theatre's history and was much guided by Merkin's physical labelling of the boxes of material. The Liverpool Central Library also houses the

archive of Liverpool City Council including accounts, reports and minutes of council meetings and committees. I examined a selection of these council records in relation to the bid, marketing and impact of Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture (2008), and to gain insight into the theatres' funding.

Material that I uncovered from The Everyman archive that proved constructive in this research included: DVD recordings of interviews undertaken by Merkin, local press cuttings, discs of images, physical production photos and internal marketing plans. From this I was able to build a partial image of the case-studies' visuals and impact. It would have been invaluable to have had access to the latest financial records, board-meeting papers and correspondence. This proved impossible as the relatively recent nature of the case studies, the earliest being 2004, meant that such documents were considered too sensitive by the theatres for release to either the archive or to myself for the benefit of this thesis. Therefore, I made certain assumptions regarding the budgetary context of productions based on older finance documents and the anecdotal evidence that was available.

Although the production photographs and contextual material yielded by the two theatre archives was useful, the ephemera conserved in relation to scenography was limited. The fragile nature of set models, drawings and their application in the workshop means they are frequently lost or damaged. In addition, the lack of documentation relating to the design process could be due to designers choosing to retain work where possible for their personal archive, rather than it being handed over to the theatres. This can be seen in the rare instances of individual designers' having kept detailed personal archives, such as the

Jocelyn Herbert Archive, now held at the National Theatre.²¹ The Everyman archive contains little in the manner of resources concerning design such as costume drawings, ground plans, lighting designs or correspondence between designers and other members of the creative team. Instead, the bulk of the material archived is related to marketing, for example programmes, posters and press cuttings, the last mainly positive about the theatre's activities and productions.

The limitations of The Everyman and Playhouse archives are not unique to the study of scenography. McMahon (2000) notes that what has been preserved by the theatres is somewhat incomplete and variable in terms of detail (McMahon 2000: 6). This inconsistency is a common issue with performance archives, as discussed by Diane Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003). Taylor states that the knowledge created in the moment of performance, and in the conversations between the creative team, is rarely discernible from what is held in the archives (Taylor 2003: 36). In her article 'Archives: Performance Remains' (2012), Rebecca Schneider also argues that the experience of performance is rarely apparent from consulting archived material which 'has come to value the document over the event' (Schneider 2012: 68). This obstacle of the 'event' (ibid) of the production being missing from the archive is particularly pertinent when it comes to the study of scenography as what a production looked like is rarely adequately perceivable from marketing or reviews.

²¹ The Jocelyn Herbert archive was deposited at Wimbledon College of Art in 2008. In 2014, it transferred to the National Theatre archive. It contains Herbert's sketchbooks, correspondence, models and diaries from her training in the 1930s up to her death in 2003. Available at <www.jocelynherbert.org>.

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Not being able to determine how a production looked, or the conditions that may have influenced that particular visualisation obscures the contribution of the designer and other backstage roles. Theatre archives frequently hide the untidy and sometimes difficult processes of production with official public-facing documents (marketing, reviews, production photos) having an authority not awarded to developmental material. This is observed by Tracy Cattell in her PhD thesis *The Living Language of Stage Management: An Interpretative Study of the History and Development of Professional Stage Management in the United Kingdom, 1567-1968* (2015). Cattell declares that the lack of process documents preserved, in particular prompt books and stage management reports, demonstrates that production arts and technical expertise are not valued in the same manner as actors, directors and texts. Subsequently, stage managers working in the UK today have ‘no means of accessing their professional heritage’ (Cattell 2015: ii). Such omission also excludes scenography from theatres’ historiographies and leaves the profession with a limited traceable legacy. Studies, such as this one, are vital in addressing how the material aspects of production contribute to a theatre’s output, and can be indicative of an institution’s artistic policy, objectives and cultural identity.

1.4.2 Interviews

The limited material available in the archives resulted in a situation where for some of the productions, I was left with an incomplete image of what the scenography had actually looked like. In order to rectify this, I undertook interviews with a selection of designers whose works are included within this thesis. I had initially planned to interview all of the designers whose designs feature in this research. However, due to various obstacles such as their availability or inability to recall certain productions, this ultimately proved impossible.

Although this was a slight frustration, this thesis is not concerned with profiling individual designers, unlike research conducted by Parker (2000) and Wright (2009), or on the processes that lead to the realisation of designs, unlike Armstrong (2010). It is possible that more extensive interviews would have been beneficial in shedding light on the conditions and the experiences of designers working at The Everyman and Playhouse. However, as this enquiry is principally about what scenography does, its impact and its reception, rather than how it comes about, I do not believe more extensive interviews would have dramatically changed the course of my research.

Due to the hectic schedules of the designers, I conducted the interviews over Skype, and, in one case, over email.²² All interviewees were asked to sign a participant consent form that permitted their comments to be included within this thesis. The screen-based interviews were convenient for the designers but limited the time they could offer and the absence of face to face contact was frustrating. As these interviews took place over the internet, often at short notice, the recordings are of poor quality and, as such, I have decided to not include them within the appendices of this thesis. I had intended to structure the interviews in accordance with the guidelines laid out by Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann in *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2009). These guidelines aim for the findings of an interview to come about through ‘social production’ (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 17). This means that information is created through conversation rather than ‘unearthed’ by the interviewer from the subject’s pre-existing knowledge (ibid, p. 148). This requires the interviewees to give long descriptions of their experiences which the short nature of my interviews made unfeasible (ibid, p. 124). In *Qualitative Interviewing: Understanding Qualitative Research* (2013), Brinkmann affirms that any qualitative interviewing

²² A breakdown of the designers interviewed is included in Appendix 1.

method is best used in conjunction with other sources of data to build a more ‘complex picture’ (Brinkmann 2013: 48). Therefore, I do not believe that the manner of the interviews was ultimately detrimental to my findings as they were concentrated on filling gaps left by the archival research. For example, by interviewing designer Ruairi Murchison, I was able to ascertain whether his final design for *Intemperance* (2007) (Chapter 2, Part 1) included a ceiling made of beer bottles that was referred to in reviews but invisible in production photos. The interviews were thus used to supplement the archival material, and in some instances, clarify suppositions I had made from incomplete references to certain elements. This can be seen in Chapter 6, where, by speaking to Mari Lotherington, designer of *Scrappers*, I was able to corroborate my assumption that the costuming of a particular character (Jodie) was a deliberate Scouse cultural reference. I therefore believe that this method of using interviews in order to augment other sources, as opposed to a key resource, had no negative effects on my research outcomes. Additionally, the challenges which I faced in organising the interviews may prove valuable to other researchers in forming their own interview methodologies.

1.4.3 Press coverage

The Everyman archive contains files of both national and local press cuttings relating to individual productions and features on the theatre. I supplemented these through archived reviews and features available through the websites of newspapers and online publications, as well as blog sites. The reviews, opinion pieces, blog posts and features published within these papers, magazines and online, allowed me to gain an overview of how each case study was received. This also allowed for gaps where some productions received very little press attention, especially within nationally published broadsheets. The variety of platforms

also made it possible to identify patterns in how productions were reviewed by critics writing for an audience largely outside of Liverpool compared to those targeting local people. I examined what in the scenography was ignored, and what was praised by these local publications compared with those with a national scope. Through this, I was able to gain an impression of how certain scenographic aesthetics and visualisations of Liverpool were evaluated differently within the city and outside of it. This cannot be considered a clear-cut division, as each publication and website have a different *modus operandi* and target demographic. Additionally, individual writers and journalists have their own perspectives and opinions on Liverpool. For example, Alfred Hickling, who authored nearly all of *The Guardian* reviews cited in this thesis, is known to pay particular attention to regional productions. I have recognised this through the inclusion of Appendix 2, which gives a brief overview of the publications and websites most often cited within this thesis. I have not, however, included biographies of individual journalists or writers, prioritising the viewpoint of the platform they are writing for.

Recent scholarship has recognised that theatre criticism serves many functions. In *Who Keeps Score on the London Stages?* (2000), Kalina Stefanova conducted interviews with a selection of London-based theatre critics and makers. A theme emerged from her work that many of the reviewers feel that their role includes shaping the direction of theatre (Stefanova 2000: 79). This is at odds with how theatre makers interviewed perceived the role of criticism as serving to contextualise the work and to open conversations (ibid, p. 88). The theatre journalist Maddy Costa in her chapter ‘The Critic as an Insider’ (2016) reflects on her position as an embedded critic at theatre-making collaborative *Chris Goode & Company*, and her ability to influence dramaturgy (Costa 2016). However, one of criticism and press coverage’s primary functions remains to act as a consumer guide to potential

theatre-goers. This is particularly evident in the way national newspapers focus their theatre coverage on London, reflecting how the potential audience for regional productions is much smaller than a London show. Unlike London, no matter how good the review is for a Liverpool production, it remains unlikely that those residing outside of the north-west would make the journey to see it. Therefore, there is disparity in the press with work in London gaining more reviews and coverage than in the rest of the UK. This has been acknowledged within the industry including by the former *Guardian* theatre critic Lynne Gardner in her article, 'In Theatre, is "Regional" a Dirty Word?' (2010). The lack of critical attention given to regional theatre has repercussions. Which productions are recognised in national publications as worthy of review, never mind praise, has consequences for those theatres and companies. A good review has currency; it can bring in larger audiences and be included in promotional materials and within bids for future funding. In 1.2.4, I discussed how theatre is understood as a commodity, capable of demonstrating the cultural capital and civility of a community or nation.²³ Therefore, which theatre is deemed to have currency at a national level is a political concern.

The neglect of regional theatre by the press contributes to how it is characterised as provincial and without significance to wider culture. There are instances where this is contested. For example, Dorney and Merkin quote critic Michael Billington's 2007 article 'No More Theatres OK!' for *The Guardian* where he claimed that regional theatres are "...as much a part of the [regional] city's identity as the local soccer team" (Billington 2007 in Dorney and Merkin 2010: 2). However, recognition from national publications is rare, and often when it does exist, such as in Billington's article, it is often framed as patronising

²³ Nicholas Hytner and Nadine Holdsworth's *Theatre and Nation* (2010) contains an overview of the role of theatre in demonstrating the culture and civility of a nation. pp. 30-34.

acknowledgement. This apparent bias on the part of London-centric press is remarked upon by Belchem in *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism* (2009) where he describes London-based criticism of Liverpool cultural events as being ‘scathing of its [Liverpool’s] insular style’ (Belchem 2009: 63). Belchem’s highlighting of the city’s perceived insularity as especially scorned by national publications is an observation that I will evidence in my scrutiny of case study reviews. The scant attention given to scenography is a common trend across national and local reviews. However, differences in expectations of design and production standards can be discerned in the ways national critics write about regional theatre as opposed to theatre in the capital. Billington, for instance in his National Theatre Platform talk *The 101 Greatest Plays* (2015) accused ‘the sophistication of production – of sound, of light, of music – the things we see on stages’ of being directly detrimental to the perceived quality of regional theatre, suggesting that a sophisticated aesthetic in a regional theatre is somehow inappropriate (Billington 2015).

The lack of attention given to Liverpool theatre in national publications is partially compensated by that paid to it in local newspapers. In considering this coverage, however it is important to bear in mind that the agenda of some of these platforms is to promote the local area and this can lead to overly positive evaluations of work seen to promote and present the city in a good light. In his article ‘Bounded Spaces in the Mobile World: Deconstructing “regional identity”’ (2002), geographer Anssi Paasi discusses how regional newspapers play a pivotal role in the construction of regional identity. Their local coverage and readership serve to enforce a ‘written narrative’ (Paasi 2002: 146) with regard to that place’s identity, including fostering a feeling of being ‘in competition with other regions’ (ibid, p. 144). Newspapers such as the *Liverpool Echo* and *The Liverpool Daily Post* disseminate information and opinions about the city, including its cultural outputs, to people who live

there. They also have a vested interest as advocates for Liverpool, marketing it as superior to other places. In terms of theatre coverage, this manifests as a civic pride and possessiveness of productions seen to celebrate the city, even if that celebration is potentially limiting or problematic. This can be seen across the case studies. For example, in Chapter 3, Part 2, reviewers including Joe Riley (in the *Liverpool Echo*) were keen to take ownership of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* as ‘written for us, by us’ (Riley 2008a), despite none of its central creative team being from Liverpool.

The analysis within this thesis of posts and reviews featured on blog sites is limited but it nevertheless adds an important perspective on the case study productions. The content featured on these websites is not subject to the same level of editorial control and restrictions as that of print or curated online publications. Barrett (2016) notes in her PhD that ‘blogging’ has to a degree filled a gap caused by there being ‘few repositories for audience opinion or other audience record.’ (Barrett 2016: 63). As theatre blogs are often written by enthusiasts who are not paid for their endeavours, they can offer a more democratic perspective on the impact of a production. However, Duška Radosavljevic in her introduction to *Theatre Criticism: Changing Landscapes* (2016), observes that blogging has also been criticised by paid reviewers as a de-professionalisation of theatre journalism and a ‘...reduction of arts criticism to personal taste’ (Radosavljevic 2016: 7). The key blog examined in this thesis, *Made Up*, is largely written by Vicky Anderson who has worked as a professional reviewer in the past for publications such as *The Liverpool Daily Post*. Nevertheless, the opinions expressed on her blog are personal in tone and demonstrate how such a platform can be critical of Liverpool work and Scouse stereotypes, for example her comments on *Hope Place* (Chapter 4) in ways that local newspapers tend to avoid.

1.5 Summary

This research concerns the presentation of Liverpool and Liverpool identities through the scenography of contemporary productions that took place on two of the city's main stages between 2004 and 2015. In this chapter, I outlined relevant literature relating to this enquiry, situating its examination of how Liverpool as place, and the culture of its inhabitants has been visualised theatrically, within the fields of scenography, cultural identity and discourses on space and place derived from social geography. I have established the critical frame work that underpins this study, including a diagram (fig. 1) of how the three distinct theoretical lenses, scenography, cultural identity and space and place, were applied to each of the 12 case study productions.

I identified gaps in existing knowledge that this thesis aims to begin to address by analysing the scenographic presentation of a regional identity through the material elements of design to show how the organisation of the stage space, set and costumes, have been used by designers to suggest Liverpool-ness. In this research, I examine the symbolism and associations of these elements and how they are potentially read differently by local and national audiences, as evidenced by reviews of the productions published inside and outside of the city. In order to gain a full picture of the designs of each production and their reception, I undertook archival research and scrutinised press attention related to each case study. I supplemented this material with interviews with designers responsible for a selection of the case studies.

The time frame of this research, 2004 to 2015, encompasses three key factors that make it significant. Firstly, these eleven years reflect a period of change for The Everyman and

Playhouse, coming just after their amalgamation in 2003, with the first full season under artistic director Bodinetz, and executive director Aydon occurring in 2004. As I will expand on in the following chapter, the theatres' commitment to new writing, produced in-house with Liverpool themes, had been launched during the tenure of previous artistic director Jo Beddoe (1999 – 2003). However, the initiative was positioned as a central part of the theatres' programming and entitled *Made in Liverpool* under Bodinetz and Aydon in their 2004 'Life Begins' season, which celebrated the Everyman's 40th anniversary.²⁴ This period also encompasses the closure and demolition (2011), and subsequent re-opening of The Everyman in a new building on the same site in 2014 (Chapter 2). Secondly, 2004 to 2015 was also a time of redevelopment and increased global scrutiny for Liverpool, with the city securing the bid to be the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2008, the event year occurring in 2008. Considering productions during the lead up to, and the year of the ECOC, reveals what image of Liverpool the theatres were seeking to project under this heightened attention (Chapter 3). The third factor that makes the years covered by this thesis an important period in the theatres' history was not known at the commencement of writing. Whilst the theatres' continued to produce in-house plays throughout 2016,²⁵ and with the notable exception of Michael Wynne's *The Star* (2016-7),²⁶ there was a noticeable shift away from major productions of new writing and/or *Made in Liverpool* themes after 2015. In December 2017, Bodinetz announced the formation of a new Everyman repertory company (the Everyman Company), with the first selection of

²⁴ See: Image and text files used in Everyman Theatre Life Begins 2004 foyer exhibition [Compact Disc], 2004, EVT reference, EVT/AV/000068

²⁵ Including an adaption of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (2016) at the Playhouse and *The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary!* (2016) at The Everyman.

²⁶ A Christmas show that was set partially in The Star Music Hall, a previous incarnation of the Playhouse (Chapter 2), in a very similar vein to Wynne's previous play *Hope Place* where some scenes took place as flashbacks to the history of the site of The Everyman (Chapter 4). The play opened the same week that Bodinetz announced the formation of the new Everyman repertory company.

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shows including musical *The Sum* (2017) by local writer Lizzie Nunnery. Starring local actors, *The Sum* was new writing, produced in-house, with local themes but was not presented under the Made in Liverpool branding, suggesting that it has been definitively dissolved in favour of marketing productions under the banner of the Everyman Company. This thesis therefore considers scenography at The Everyman and Playhouse at a distinct point in time when Made in Liverpool productions, as a key aspect of the theatre's output, were launched, established and finally, moving towards suspension.

In the next chapter I will further establish how this research defines, characterises and analyses Liverpool as place and Liverpool identities as presented through scenography. I will provide context as to the reading of Liverpool-ness through discussions as to how the city has been considered and understood locally, nationally and globally. Further, I will clarify my use of Scouse as a term referring to specific aspect of Liverpool identity and how, although the Scouse identities have frequently been subject to negative portrayal and presentation in news and entertainment media, their representation within plays produced from inside of the city can actually work to destabilise some of these unfavourable stereotypes.

Chapter 2

Liverpool Identities

...we're not English, we're Scouse.

Tony Crowley 2012: 136

2. Liverpool identities

In the previous chapter I examined existing literature relating to the central enquiry of this thesis in order to situate its contribution to knowledge. I discussed how this thesis is concerned with the visualisation of Liverpool through representations of areas and landmarks in the city, and through what I refer to here as a “Liverpool-ness”. Liverpool-ness relates to what Doreen Massey defines as a ‘sense of place’ (1994: 26). A ‘sense of place’ (ibid) refers to the ways a place is understood through how it is experienced, thought of from within and outside of its borders, and related to other places (see 1.2.7). This study seeks to reveal how a Liverpool sense of place and a Scouse identity as embodied and understood by individuals from within and outside of the city has been visualised in productions about Liverpool and the north-west at The Everyman and Playhouse.

This research does not attempt to offer any conclusive definition as to the geographical boundaries or the social and cultural practices upon which Scouse identities and Liverpool-ness are founded. Instead, I examine how certain symbols and identifiers are employed within the scenography of selected case studies. I then consider the objectives and potential readings of this scenography by identifying some of the key elements that have been thought of as integral to Liverpool’s distinctiveness. This includes both how the city has expressed itself as different from the rest of the UK, and how it has been painted as such from outside perspectives.

Analysing how Liverpool and its related identities have been visualised at The Everyman and Playhouse also warrants a brief assessment of those theatres’ distinctiveness and reputation within the city (2.2, 2.3). Although all of the case studies within this thesis took place after the theatres’ merger in 2003, the theatres each have their own individual statuses due to their discrete histories prior to their coming together. The theatres are representative of two models commonly seen in regional theatre. The Everyman was known historically as a risk-taking, left-wing repertory, whilst the Playhouse had been previously considered as a traditionalist producing and touring venue.

Finally, in this chapter, I pay particular attention to how Scouse has been delimited as an identity by reviewing some of its most commonly seen gendered stereotypes (2.6). These occur especially within what Tony Crowley has defined as the ‘scouse [sic] industry’ (Crowley 2012: 63). This ‘industry’ (ibid) refers to how Scouse-ness has been performed on stage and screen (ibid, pp. 74-80). I will establish not only who these performances typically show as included within this Scouse identity, but also who has been habitually left out.

2.1 Liverpool Exceptionalism

The formation of Liverpool and its rich political and economic history are outside the scope of this thesis and, as I discussed in the literature review, well covered by writers and historians including Ronaldo Munck (2003), John Belchem (2006, 2007) and Belchem and Biggs (2011). The city has a long tradition of considering itself as exceptional, as different to the rest of the UK, and this is linked to its history as a globally significant port. The self-proclaimed difference of Liverpool is conveyed through the culture of local people, with Scouse being a particular aspect of this culture which is expressed through personal and public performance.

Local people’s pride in their Liverpool identity is often pronounced as trumping nationalism. Crowley quotes the well-known football chant: ‘[W]e’re not English, we’re Scouse’ (Crowley 2012: 136). This pride is inseparable from the city’s self-pronounced exceptionalism, and its tradition for tall stories. This is expressed poetically by the music journalist Paul Morley in his essay ‘Liverpool Surreal’ (2007), which is quoted at length by Crowley (2012).

Liverpool is not part of England... [it is] an island set in a sea of dreams and nightmares that’s forever taking place in the imagination.... jutting out into time between the stabilizing [sic] pull of history and the sweeping, shuffling pull of myth. (Morley 2007: 42 in Crowley 2012: 135)

When constructed from within the city, these Liverpool ‘myth[s]’ (ibid) serve as the basis of an identity that reassures inhabitants as to their place in the world. The history of Liverpool, its cultural identity, constructed traditions and recognised ways of being in the city represent a security of the known. Clear symbols employed within theatrical productions such as maps (*Hope Place* 2014, Chapter 4), images of local landmarks

(*Unprotected* 2006, Chapter 5) or even songs by the Beatles (*Urban Legend* 2004, Chapter 5) root the plays' happenings as occurring within the city. Yet this insular frame of local references can also signify a retreat into comforting familiarity, especially when Liverpool is faced with excessive criticism from outsiders.

2.1.1 A history of bad press

In the 21st century, Liverpool is known globally for its culture – its world-famous football teams, performers, musical and literary heritage – rather than for its past economic or political legacies. Alongside its architecture, museums, galleries, UNESCO heritage site waterfront (the Albert Dock) and nightlife, this cultural profile has put Liverpool on the UK map as a desirable tourist destination. In spite of this, the city maintains a negative reputation, which is repeatedly mined by entertainment and news media. I will return to how Liverpool and particularly Scouse identity have been stereotyped on stage, film and, especially, television in 2.6. In this section I determine the effects that this reporting on Liverpool, as disseminated in nationally published broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, has had on how the city is perceived. In the examination of the press reception of my case studies, I will show how this negative attention can be seen to have specifically manipulated how Made in Liverpool work is considered.

During the period covered by this thesis, Liverpool underwent major regeneration, particularly in its preparations for its year as the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2008 (Chapter 3). In his chapter 'The New Livercool, History, Culture and Identity on Merseyside' (2007), Belchem bemoaned how the national press remained sarcastic about Liverpool's achievement in winning the ECOC title (Belchem 2007: 231). He described how tabloid journalists expressed mock concern about the 'psychological impact on scousers' who were used to 'wallowing in mawkish laments about their defeats' (ibid). This scepticism as to the city's appropriateness for such celebration continued into the year itself.²⁷ Belchem's comments substantiate the widely held opinion in Liverpool that the national media are biased against the city (see Skidmore 1990, Boyle 1995). This bias is seen as stemming from the city's combative opposition to Thatcherism and its resistance to

²⁷ In 2008, BBC TV's *Panorama* documentary series broadcast *Young Guns* (BBC 2008), a documentary on gun crime in Liverpool. This programme reinforced the national image of Liverpool as an especially dangerous place.

government mandates through council-level and trade union activities (Belchem and Briggs 2011). Liverpool's reputation has also been tarnished by its association with a series of high-profile crimes and events headlined in the national media. These crimes and their images of violence, addiction and poverty have not only been visualised as the norm but as somehow inescapable, with Liverpool's inhabitants as the inevitable perpetrators. The city has been cast as having its own particular psyche that leaves it predisposed to tragedy and violence. Mediated images and reporting in the tabloid press of the Heysel stadium disaster (1985), the murder of James Bulger (1993), the execution of Liverpool-born Iraq hostage Ken Bigley (2004) and the shooting of eleven-year-old Rhys Jones (2007) have taken a narrative stance that these incidents are somehow related to, or even a direct consequence of, this perceived unfortunate character. This hostile perspective produces a complex reaction from those living their daily lives within the city and this complexity is also evident in the way Liverpool is presented on stage.

The perception that Liverpool has a predisposition to misfortune has also led to an image of the city as self-pitying. The city's professed exceptionalism and separatism from the rest of the UK has seen it characterised as possessing an 'excessive sentimentality' (Belchem, 2006: xvi). In her PhD thesis, Maria Barrett (2016) examines how this perceived sentimentality has been linked to Liverpool's sense of being 'hard done by' (Barrett 2016: 234). This sense was reinforced after the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, and the tragedy's subsequent false reporting in the tabloid press. The following detail as to the tragic event and aftermath of Hillsborough are included in this thesis as the incident signifies a major tipping point in how Liverpool came to be painted as an unruly, criminal place nationally, and of the local anger that persists at the way the city was falsely smeared by the tabloid press. The Hillsborough disaster occurred at a football match in 1989 where 96 Liverpool fans were crushed to death at the stadium due to poor crowd control. The tabloid newspaper *The Sun* (1989) reported that Liverpool fans were to blame for the disaster and were witnessed picking the pockets of the dead, urinating on corpses and attacking paramedics and police. The April 2016 enquiry verdict found no blame rested with Liverpool fans, instead ruling that the 96 were unlawfully killed by a combination of gross negligence by the police and ambulance forces, crowd control and the poor design of the stadium. At the time of writing it had been recently confirmed, on 29 June 2018 that Former Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield who was in charge of the match that day would be charged with 95 counts of manslaughter by gross negligence (Anon 2018). The

stigma caused by the fabricated headlines is still strongly felt in Liverpool, with *The Sun* widely boycotted in the city.²⁸

The defamation of Liverpool that followed the Hillsborough disaster has had a long-reaching effect in entrenching a national impression of the city as a ‘sentimental, self-dramatizing [sic] place’ (Alan Bennett in Belchem 1997: 118). In 2004, then Conservative MP for Henley Boris Johnson referred to the disaster in his much-decried editorial on the murder of Ken Bigley in *The Spectator*: ‘Bigley’s Fate’ (Johnson 2004). Deriding what he viewed as a nationwide trend for ‘mawkish sentimentality’, Johnson denounced the people of Liverpool as having a ‘flawed psychological state’ (Johnson 2004). He described the outpouring of grief that followed Bigley’s death as a ‘wallow[ing]’ in Liverpool’s self-prescribed ‘victim status’ (ibid). Johnson claimed that the city’s outrage at the Hillsborough accusations was typical of Liverpool seeking instead to ‘blame someone else’ (ibid) for the tragedy. This belief in Liverpool having a victim status persists, as does a view of the city’s inhabitants as feckless and predisposed to criminality. Such opinion has created an insidious imagining of Liverpool as responsible for its own misfortune which has influenced how the city has been reported and presented.

The image of Liverpool as a dangerous, crime-ridden place as presented in the press has had a noticeable effect on its theatrical visualisation. The two case studies of Chapter 5 illustrate how dramatic themes of social unrest and lawbreaking have become synonymous with an image of the city as urban and neglected. This can also be observed more widely across this thesis with narratives including theft, drugs (*Paradise Bound* 2006, Chapter 3, Part 1) prostitution and violence (*Intemperance* 2007, Chapter 3, Part 1) set against designs showing a rundown Liverpool. These designs focused on particular, inner-city and Dockland areas of the city, showing them as marginalised and dilapidated, rarely attributing such social issues to more middle-class districts. The city’s tribulations have also been habitually shown in Made in Liverpool productions as a modern problem. Even in

²⁸ In 1998 The Everyman co-produced with the National Theatre Jonathan Harvey’s *Guiding Star* (1998), a play about the Hillsborough disaster. The play was directed by Gemma Bodinetz (who later became artistic director at The Everyman and Playhouse) and designed by Bruce Macadie. It is not included within this thesis as it was not a produced under the Made in Liverpool banner. It is of interest, however, that at the time of writing this thesis, this play, which presented Liverpool as resistant to national vilification, is the only one to have been performed within the city and at The National Theatre.

Intemperance (2007), a production set in the 19th century, the troubles of the city's past were depicted largely to hold a mirror up to their contemporary equivalent. At the same time the city's past has frequently been idealised with productions glossing over historic problems in favour of presenting Liverpool as once having been an untroubled, prosperous and harmonious place. For instance, the way the community of Dingle, a working-class area of Liverpool, is visualised in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008) as compared to in *Paradise Bound* (2006). In the latter play, set in 2006, the area was presented as poor, overlooked and shabby with its worn-down inhabitants partaking in casual theft and substance abuse. In *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, 1930s Dingle was shown as a noble, resilient neighbourhood with the romanticised poor of the past happy and dancing beneath washing lines. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, Part 2, such dichotomy between theatrical visualisation of Liverpool disadvantaged communities contributes to a problematic ennobling of "the poor" of the city's past, whilst demonising their contemporaneous counterparts.

2.2. Biography of The Everyman

This section, as with the one that follows on the Playhouse, offers only a brief overview of the history of the theatres. This is intended to give a context to their individual status in the city which reflects how productions realised on their respective stages are considered. Although only one case study within this thesis took place at the Playhouse (*Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*), both theatres' legacies contribute significantly to their joint identity after their amalgamation (2003). The reason for this thesis's slant towards productions at The Everyman is purely due to it presenting a far greater number of Made in Liverpool productions (see 2.4), while the Playhouse hosts more touring work. This imbalance can also be connected to the theatres' distinct characters, histories and subsequent local reputations.

The Everyman was founded in 1964 by then-students Martin Jenkins, Peter James and Terry Hands. It was envisioned as answering a perceived need in Liverpool for an intellectual and political producing theatre. The venue was Hope Hall, established on Hope Street in 1853 and converted to its then-configuration in 1912. At the time of the theatre's opening, Hope Hall continued to operate as cinema and nightclub for three days a week. The original Everyman stage was a poor-quality, raked construction built by the

founding resident company, upon a series of flexible steel frames. There were ramps on either side and the archway at the back had a cinema screen allowing the use of projection. The workshop was originally in the basement which was also occupied by the theatre's popular bistro restaurant. The impracticality of this arrangement meant that everything had to be built and painted on its side in order to be able to get it out and up onto the stage.

George Rowell and Anthony Jackson describe the theatre's original programming as 'alternative rep' (Rowell and Jackson 1984: 157), due to its emphasis on risk-taking productions and its 'young and radical' (Barrett 2016: 138) audiences.²⁹ The theatre and its popular late-night opening restaurant quickly became a fashionable hub for artists to meet in the city. After Alan Dossor's appointment as artistic director in 1970, the theatre shifted focus to work that spotlighted local writers, actors and issues. Turnbull (2001) reports Dossor as stating that the theatre was no longer interested 'in plays that did not relate to the community outside' (Turnbull 2001: 169). The theatre's commitment to representing local people became a vital factor in its identity, and this endured through the diverse visions of a succession of artistic directors. Plays such as *John, Paul, George, Ringo and Bert* (1974), *Lennon* (1981), *The Braddock's Time* (1970) and *Scouse* (1996) represent a small snapshot of The Everyman's locally focused, popular stagings over the years.

The Everyman has a history of financial precarity that has contributed to its past reputation as a 'scruffy theatre' (Dossor 1974 in Merkin 2004: 98). In 1985 the theatre was so close to insolvency that then-artistic director Glen Walford was putting on a show in the auditorium whilst the bailiffs took possession of assets in the theatre's offices (Walford in Merkin 2004: 188). It was rescued once more from the brink of closure in 1993 by the owners of its successful basement bistro.³⁰ This financial insecurity has had consequences for the theatre's scenography as described by Peter Ling, the theatre's resident designer in

²⁹ The repertory programme also included Shakespeare and set texts from public examinations in order to draw a guaranteed audience from the city's sixth forms and universities (Merkin 2004: 14-22).

³⁰ The Everyman was closed between June 1993 and February 1994 due to the board putting the theatre into voluntary liquidation despite a £100,000 handout from the Playhouse and the fundraising of the Campaign for Performing Arts on Merseyside (1993). David Scott and Paddy (Patrick) Byrne, who had run the Bistro in the basement of the theatre for twenty years, secured the freehold of The Everyman building for £260,000. They then leased the auditorium back to the new Everyman board.

the 1970s, in his 2006 interview with Merkin for The Everyman archive. Ling referred to creating designs on the theatre's original stage with minimal budgets as a constant 'struggle' (Ling 2006). This struggle was exacerbated by the city's other theatres appearing to be vastly better funded (ibid). Ling also explained how The Everyman's aesthetic was developed to counteract the 'character' of the thrust stage,³¹ with its lack of wings or curtain, and exposed back brick wall. He described it as 'very immediate... that was why the acting was so good – there was nowhere to hide' (ibid). The space was overhauled in 1976 to finally become a purpose-built theatre. It was demolished and completely rebuilt in 2011 by theatre architects Haworth Tompkins, reopening in 2014 with a design that won the RIBA Stirling Prize for architecture (2014). The Everyman's new architecture makes an emphatic point of asserting itself as local, being quite literally clad in photographs of local people on its façade (Haworth Tompkins 2013).

The new Everyman no longer includes scenic workshops, the basement is now occupied by rehearsal rooms and an expanded restaurant,³² with the theatre's sets now built by outside companies. The space now has all the modern trappings of a technologically equipped theatre, with full lighting, sound, AV and flying equipment, yet it maintains many of the features of Ling's underfunded original. The auditorium is still mostly configured as a thrust stage, although the seating can be arranged to create an in-the-round space. The standard thrust configuration seats 405 over two levels. The playing area still has an exposed brick back wall, with no permanent curtains or wings. The new theatre's connection to its history is so vital that reclaimed bricks from the original theatre are incorporated as a feature into its décor.

2.3 Biography of the Playhouse

The Playhouse is widely recognised as the third oldest repertory in Britain.³³ It is located on Williamson Square, central to Liverpool's main shopping district. The square is a

³¹ A stage configuration where the audience are wrapped around three sides of the playing area.

³² This restaurant is not related to the original Everyman Bistro. Scott and Byrne were later involved in the opening of a new bistro, The Pen Factory, next door to The Everyman.

³³ Some texts, including *The Liverpool Repertory Theatre 1911- 1934* (Wyndham Goldie 1935:12), claim that the Playhouse is the oldest repertory in Britain. However, as the

historic site of theatregoing, having been previously occupied by the Star Music Hall, which was established in 1866. The music hall became the Star Theatre of Varieties in 1896, and, later, the Star Theatre in 1898, and was dedicated to ‘blood and thunder melodrama’ after obtaining a dramatic licence (Ackroyd 1996: 47). In 1911, the theatre became the Liverpool Repertory Theatre, renamed the Liverpool Playhouse, commonly known as the Playhouse, in 1917. During this time, the auditorium underwent major reconfiguration, remodelled by Stanley Adshead. Its capacity was reduced from 2,000 to 760, and its stage was enlarged. Barrett (2016) describes how, over a relatively short time frame, this transformation saw the Playhouse reposition itself from producing the ‘base’ entertainment to highbrow ‘legitimate’ theatre (Barrett 2016: 143). Since then, the Playhouse has been considered ‘bourgeois’, ‘formal’ and ‘safe’ (ibid, pp. 217-218), attracting a core demographic that was typically middle aged and middle class (McMahon and Brooks 2000: 142). However, this has not protected it from financial insecurity and the theatre was forced to go dark between 1998 and 2000.

At the time of writing, the Playhouse building has Grade II listed status. Its lavish Victorian auditorium seats 650 over three levels. The theatre’s circle bar and foyer areas, housed in a glass and steel tower adjoining the original building, were added in 1968. The stage is raked and framed by a proscenium arch. The back row of the upper circle is unusually close to the front of the stage, approximately sixty feet, giving the space an intimacy that belies its size. Pelham McMahon and Pam Brooks (2000) describe this intimacy as having ‘the great advantage of giving everyone the feeling of being near the stage’ (McMahon and Brooks 2000: 13). Grace Wyndham Goldie (1935) writes that the stage and this perceived closeness of the audience has had a direct effect on the sort of work that the theatre could successfully stage. She states that the Playhouse’s (then Liverpool Repertory Theatre) stage was ‘at once a cause of the theatre’s success and a limitation set upon its activity’ (Wyndham Goldie 1935: 219). In his interview conducted for this thesis, Ruairi Murchison (2016) corroborated Wyndham Goldie’s assessment, stating that the stage’s challenges are still felt by contemporary designers working at the Playhouse today. Recalling his design for *Tartuffe* (2008) at the theatre, he claimed that the Playhouse possessed some of the most ‘challenging sight lines’ of any similar space (Murchison 2016). This is of interest in

Playhouse operated as a repertory strictly from 1911, it is largely recognised that the Manchester Gaiety (established 1884) is the oldest.

considering how designer Chris Woods organised the stage for *Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi*. His configuration of the space reflected the traditional, large-scale musical he was designing for, but also may have been the most logical solution to these difficult sight lines.

This thesis also includes two productions that took place in the Playhouse Studio after The Everyman and Playhouse's merger. The Playhouse Studio is upstairs from the main space, adjacent to the theatre bar. A windowless, low-ceilinged studio space, it can seat 70 people in unfixed seating. The space opened in 1971 with a production of *King Lear*. Artistic director Antony Tuckey (1969 – 1975) intended for the Playhouse Studio to provide a place for radical work that could not be risked on the main stage which required '50 to 60% box office' to survive (Tuckey in Merkin 2011: 125). This included the launch of 'After Hours' shows, plays performed at 11pm, which were programmed in the studio between 1977 and 1978. Some works, such as *Fat Harold* (1976) and *Blood on the Dole* (1981), that were presented there were great successes, selling out and securing London transfers. The Playhouse Studio continued to stage premieres of new work into the 1990s but became increasingly used as a rehearsal room. It was relaunched in 2011 with *Swallowing Dark* by local author Lizzie Nunnery in celebration of the theatre's centenary.

2.4 The merger of the theatres

In 1997, Arts Council England commissioned a study on Liverpool's theatres that called for The Everyman and Playhouse to merge and put an end to what the Arts Council perceived as their competitive policies. The Arts Council described the individual approaches of the theatres' as 'anarchy and self-interest', arguing that it contributed to their financial struggles (*Liverpool Echo* 1997 in Merkin 2004: 265). The process began in 1999 with the launch of the Merseyside Theatres Trust and the appointment of Jo Beddoe as the first joint artistic director of The Everyman and Playhouse.³⁴ The theatres officially merged on the 1 April 2000. The amalgamation was not without challenges, including

³⁴ The merger was preliminarily scheduled to take place as part of the ECOC regeneration. An article in the *Liverpool Echo* (2003) reported that initial plans proposed to demolish both theatres and build a new complex on the Albert Dock. The idea was met with wide disdain, with Liverpool council member Rex Makin saying it was 'ludicrous' and would take 'the lifeblood out of the city centre' (Makin 2003). See: Press cuttings and publicity materials for Everyman and Playhouse autumn-winter season, [Printed Material], Press cutting, *Liverpool Echo* 2003, EVT reference, EVT/PC/000091.

accusations that it would water down the separate identities of the theatres. Roger Hill, in his chapter ‘The Revolution will not be Dramatised’ (2011) reported how many local people felt that the merger would see The Everyman and Playhouse lose their standing as ‘destination theatres’ (Hill 2011: 85). By ‘destination’, Hill means that local audiences would go to see a play at the theatres no matter what it was, as the fact it was on at those spaces was a sufficient indicator of quality. However, these fears appear to have been unfounded with the merger seeing an instant increase at the box office, a 33% rise in the theatres’ ticket sales between 2003 and 2004, (Merkin 2004: 293).

Opinion persists that The Everyman and Playhouse have maintained differing audience profiles post-merger.³⁵ However, Barrett (2016) points to evidence that this is no longer the case, citing cultural strategy company Morris Hargreaves McIntyre’s 2012 report *Culture Segments: Expression* (Barrett 2016: 138). This study claimed that both theatres attract ‘older’, ‘well-educated professional’ audiences (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2012: 9, in Barrett *ibid*). Barrett speculates that the joining of the theatres ‘blurred the distinction for and between audiences’ (Barrett *ibid*). It can no longer be assumed that the Playhouse caters for a traditionalist, middle-class audience compared to the young, avant-garde and more working-class patrons of The Everyman. Yet this impression of the theatres’ different identities and demographics persists and is observable in how productions are discussed and targeted.

2.4.1 Made in Liverpool productions

In 2002 Beddoe initiated a new writing policy for the theatres. She brought in Suzanne Bell to act as literary manager and began commissioning in-house works, committing to produce 10 ‘Homegrown’ works per year (Beddoe 2005). The appointment of Bell and funding from the BBC Northern Exposure programme (2003) enabled the theatres to create a network of new Liverpool writers, and to stage work using local directors and designers (*ibid*). The first play produced under this initiative was *A Little Pinch of Chilli* (2003)

³⁵ This was stated repeatedly by Gemma Bodinetz in her interview with Ros Merkin. (2006)

by Liverpool writer Maurice Bessman at The Everyman.³⁶ *A Little Pinch of Chilli* is not included in this thesis as I have not been able to locate any images of Jocelyn Meall's set design. I also decided that restricting the study to the tenure of one artistic director would offer a more focused selection of case studies.

Under Bodinetz and Aydon, 'Homegrown' was formalised as part of The Everyman and Playhouse's artistic policy and retitled Made in Liverpool. Bodinetz (2006) described Made in Liverpool as a 'stamp' that indicated 'home-grown [sic]' work (Bodinetz 2006 in Merkin 2011: 231). This 'stamp' was intended to show how local work was not parochial and was capable of 'taking centre stage nationally' (ibid). In order to maintain this manifesto, as I will show through the case studies, Bodinetz employed directors and designers from outside of the city. The theatres' use of Made in Liverpool within their marketing was not always consistent, with it also being used to refer to adaptations of canon works by local writers, such as Roger McGough's interpretations of *Tartuffe* (2008) and *The Hypochondriac* (2009), and on rare occasions about new writing not set in Liverpool, such as Katie Douglas' *Fly* (2004), set in Scotland. The slogan was also used in reference to two Shakespeare plays, *King Lear* (2008) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (2010), that represent an apparent break with what the label was supposed to designate but were advertised as being Made in Liverpool works as they starred famous Liverpool actors, Pete Postlethwaite and Kim Cattrall respectively, in leading roles.³⁷

This research recognises that whilst the Made in Liverpool 'stamp' has no longer been applied to productions post The Everyman's relaunch of a repertory company in 2017, its use can be said to have declined prior to this. Examination of programmes and press releases covering the launch of The Everyman and Playhouse seasons in The Everyman

³⁶ Although during this period, the Playhouse in-house produced *Around the World in 80 Days* (2001), this was not advertised as a 'Homegrown' work, being a Christmas show and neither about Liverpool or by a local writer.

³⁷ There is one, additional example I have observed where Made in Liverpool was used in reference to a play that was not new writing. The programme for *The Price* (2009), at the Playhouse describes the play as 'our [the Everyman and Playhouse] first Made in Liverpool production of 2009'. *The Price* is a 1968 play by Arthur Miller. However, I regard this as an exception to the stipulations of a Made in Liverpool production, rather than an extension of them. The Everyman and Playhouse and Nottingham Playhouse. (2009) *The Price*, 7 February 2009, programme, the Playhouse: Liverpool.

archive demonstrate Made in Liverpool being used prominently up to 2009,³⁸ and personal communication with the theatres' marketing manager Rebecca Andrews (2018) confirmed anecdotal evidence that there was 'no definitive end ...where we [The Everyman and Playhouse] finished using that [Made in Liverpool] campaign message' (Andrews 2018). Therefore, although the slogan rarely appears post the opening of the new Everyman building in 2014, this thesis considers the official end of Made in Liverpool programming to be 2017, when the theatres definitively shifted the manner in which they promote new writing, focussing on The Everyman repertory company and the development opportunities available through their New Works department.³⁹

Bracketing productions that can be considered Made in Liverpool works in this manner, as having been part of the theatres' output between 2004 and 2017, even if the play was not especially marketed as such, also allows this thesis to separate such works from the rest of the theatres' programming. Taking the theatres' own definition of a Made in Liverpool production as new writing set in Liverpool or the neighbouring north-west and/or with Liverpool themes, usually by local writers, draws a clear distinction between other in-house productions that occurred during the time frame set by this thesis. These included the UK premiere of *Yellowman* (2004) at The Everyman, plus several works directed by Bodinetz including *The Mayor of Zalamea* (2004), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (2004) *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (2004), *All My Sons* (2006) and *Educating Rita* (2015). During the period covered by this research, 2004 to 2015, this thesis considers thirty-one of The Everyman and Playhouse's in-house production as being Made in Liverpool works, with the majority being heavily marketed as such. These productions are detailed in Appendix 3 of this thesis with the twelve plays considered within this thesis indicated by an asterisk.

2.5 Scouse identity/identities

In this thesis, Scouse refers to a performative aspect of Liverpool identity that is expressed by, and attributed to, people living in Liverpool. The identity is referred to by Crowley (2012) as a form of 'cognitive mapping... a reference point – cultural, linguistic, historical,

³⁸ Handbill, *Spirits of the Stone*, [Printed Material], 2009, EVT reference, EVT/PR/000504

³⁹ New Works is the department of The Everyman and Playhouse that deals with script submissions and developing new work through initiatives including scratch nights, Young Everyman and Playhouse and writers' groups.

political' (2012: 138). This 'cognitive mapping' differentiates Liverpool culture from that of the rest of the UK and creates a sense of place. The etymology of the term Scouse has been studied in depth by Belchem (2006, 2007) and Crowley (2012). In their article 'The "Social Life" of Scouse: Understanding Contemporary Liverpool through Changing Food Practices' (2010), Ciara Kierans and Jane Haeney discuss how Scouse originated from a type of stew known as lobscouse. Lobscouse was popular with sailors and is 'hybrid', 'improvised' and has a 'symbiotic link with poverty' (Kierans & Haeney 2010: 102). These are all attributes that are also associated with Scouse culture.

The key identifier of Scouse identity has largely been considered to be the possession of a particular accent, itself referred to as Scouse.⁴⁰ In his article 'Sonic geography, place and race in the formation of local identity: Liverpool and Scousers' (2010), Philip Boland defines Scouse as an identity that is primarily constructed, and that has endured through language (Boland 2010: 7). However, in this research, Scouse and Scouse-ness refer to other, less easily distinguishable identifiers. In his chapter "An accent exceedingly rare": Scouse and the inflexion of class' (1997), John Belchem links the Scouse accent directly to some of these identifiers. He asserts that the accent is an 'essential medium' for the projection of Liverpool's 'local micro-culture' (Belchem 1997: 100). He characterises this culture as 'the "scouse" blend of truculent defiance, collective solidarity, scallywaggery and fatalist humour' (ibid). Although these qualities have been complicated by their association with certain, often unfavourable, Scouse stereotypes (2.6), understanding Scouse-ness in terms of such less tangible attributes – a sense of humour, resilience and self-proclaimed exceptionalism – informs my consideration of its theatrical presentation.

Classifying these qualities, along with people or places, as Scouse, is complex, with the cultural and geographical⁴¹ boundaries of the identity frequently disputed. Yet a relative constant is the assertion that Scouse is a working-class identity (Crowley 2012, Barrett

⁴⁰ The accent and its roots has been considered in depth by Gerald Knowles (1973) in his PhD thesis *Scouse: The Urban Dialect of Liverpool*.

⁴¹ It is disputed how far 'Scouse' identity extends north of Liverpool's city centre, however, it is generally accepted, within Liverpool at least, that people who are born and/or live on the other side of the river Mersey cannot be considered Scouse. People who live on the Wirral, the area directly across the water, are commonly referred to in local slang as 'woolly backs' or 'wools' because of their perceived proximity to the Lancashire countryside. The descriptor is rarely intended to be complimentary, with the term often used to insult people or places perceived as not authentically Scouse.

2016). John Murden, in his chapter 'City of Change and Challenge: Liverpool since 1945 (2006), links the Scouse sense of 'humour', 'immunity to intimidation' and 'belligerence' (2006: 197) to how working-class communities in the city have struggled against authority. The classification of Scouse as a working-class identity thus associates it with historic dock workers and their trades unions in the city (Crowley 2012: 107). This has resulted in certain limited assumptions. For instance, that Scouse identity is not only working-class but also represents heteronormativity and, as I will discuss in 2.5.1, whiteness. This can be seen across the Made in Liverpool productions, where a lack of diversity in the characters and the actors playing them serves to limit the presentation of Scouse identity.

2.5.1 Liverpool-born black

The twelve case studies considered in this thesis include only one actor of colour in a major role.⁴² This reflects how it remains relatively rare, across stage and screen, to see people of colour cast as characters that could be read as Scouse. Although Scouse has largely been considered a white identity, the lived truth is more complicated. The continued exclusion of people of colour from presentations of Liverpool identity compounds a narrow view of Scouse-ness that denies the heterogeneous make-up of the city and could be seen to entrench divisions between communities. Liverpool identity is inextricably linked to the city's wealth which was built on its role in the transatlantic slave trade. The International Slavery Museum (based in Liverpool) estimates that in 1795, Liverpool facilitated up to 80% of the UK slave trade and that the city continued profiting from the sale of human beings long after slavery was banned in Britain in 1807 (National Museums Liverpool 2017). Although racial tensions in Liverpool have frequently been fraught,⁴³ historians including Raymond Costello in *Black Liverpool: The Early History of Britain's Oldest Black Community 1730-1918* (2001), and Belchem in *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in 20th-*

⁴² Ryan in *Scrappers* (2013) played by David Judge. (Chapter 6).

⁴³ Liverpool experienced race riots in 1981 in the L8 district of the city, commonly misclassified by the London media as Toxteth. These disturbances had ripples of impact as late as 1988 and beyond. Diane Frost highlights the frequent 'stop and searching' of black youth by police as being deemed 'outright racial hostility and contempt' (Frost and Phillips 2011: 53). Liverpool has long carried the legacy of the 'race riots', despite the clashes, unlike those in Brixton earlier that same year, not actually being officially classified as thus (ibid, p. 65). See: Frost, D. and Phillips, R. eds. (2011) *Liverpool '81: Remembering the Riots*.

Century Liverpool (2014) have examined how Liverpool Black identity is one that is long established and complex.

The colloquial classification ‘LBB’ – ‘Liverpool-born Black’ (Boland 2010: 13) – suggests that to be Black and to be Scouse is not incontestably a contradiction.⁴⁴ In her article ‘West Africans, Black scousers and the colour problem in inter-war Liverpool’ (1996) Diane Frost quotes the experience of Paul, who self-identifies as a ‘black scouser’ (Frost 2011: 213). Although Paul feels Liverpool to be ‘racist’ and that his ‘blackness’ (ibid) is more central to his identity than his Scouse-ness, he acknowledges that they co-exist. Boland (2010) also asserts that Scouse can exist in harmony with other identities and how ‘local black people and those of Irish, Chinese, Malay and other origins’ express aspects of self, depends on the context (Boland 2010: 16). Yet it remains that Liverpool people of colour rarely get to express or see their Scouse identity performed on stage and/or screen, where the predisposition is still that to be Scouse is synonymous with being white.

Frost agrees that Scouse culture does not include people of colour as ‘to be Scouse is to be white and working class’ (Frost 1996: 56). Although Liverpool’s multiculturalism has long been a point of pride, Belchem observes in his chapter ‘Cosmopolitan Liverpool’ (2006)⁴⁵ that the lived reality for people of colour and other ethnic and religious minorities,⁴⁶ past and present, has not reflected this professed diversity. Frost, in her chapter ‘Ambiguous Identities: constructing and de-constructing black and white ‘Scouse’ identities in twentieth-century Liverpool’ (2000), states that this is particularly true of cultural events with ‘few black faces’ seen at the city centre’s bars, clubs or football matches (Frost 2011: 205). This is echoed by Mark Christian in his chapter ‘Black Identity in Liverpool: An appraisal’ (1997). He writes that Scouse culture has been white-washed, as ‘they [white

⁴⁴ Frost (2000) disputes that LBB was ever intended as a positive identifier, citing its origins as a descriptor for the bi-racial children of black west-African sailors and local, Liverpool white women. LBB was a ‘racist, eugenicist’ term, and the children were seen as evidence of the city’s ‘moral decline’ (Frost 2000: 203). Mark Christian (1997) sees LBB in a more favourable light but recognises that the identity can never be considered in terms of blackness, only understood in relation to whiteness (Christian 1997: 72).

⁴⁵ In Belchem, J. ed. (2006) *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History*. pp. 311-393.

⁴⁶ Liverpool’s Chinatown, established in the 1860s, is the oldest in Europe. The city’s Chinese community and its cultural outputs are considered in detail in Maria Lin Wong’s (1989) *Chinese Liverpoolians: A History of the Chinese Community in Liverpool*. The city is also home to a long-standing British Muslim community established by Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam (né William Henry Quilliam), who held weekly Islamic meetings in Liverpool from 1893.

Liverpudlians] can and pinpoint its [local culture] unique content and they name all of it scouse' (Christian 1997: 148). The lack of actors of colour cast in Made in Liverpool productions extends this apparent 'claiming' (ibid) of Scouse culture by white people, to theatre.

The Everyman has historically taken conscious steps to develop a relationship with Liverpool's black communities, including supporting the work of Merseyside's first black theatre company, *Nyeusi* (est. 1996) and Beddoe proclaiming a commitment to blind casting (2002). Despite this, the faces of Made in Liverpool productions remain almost exclusively white. This paucity of representation and thus potential exclusion from Scouse identity extends to other BAME communities, to queer identities, who are rarely seen within Made in Liverpool productions, and to women who are rarely portrayed in other than caregiving and decorative roles. This is despite Liverpool's history and lived experiences documenting Scouse as signifying diverse and multi-faceted identities across a range of different locales throughout the city.

2.6 Performing Scouse

Scouse identity has been performed and commodified in order to sell cultural products such as music, literature and comedy. What Crowley has referred to as the 'Scouse industry' has designated Liverpool as a backdrop for, especially on television, typically working-class set drama (Crowley 2012: 63). The Scouse 'industry' has had a strong impact on what Liverpool and its inhabitants are imagined to be like nationally. Crowley (2012) observes that this imagining, like that propagated in news media, is seldom positive. Despite Scouse-ness having been utilised internally towards promoting the city, including by the theatres in Made in Liverpool productions, its representation within entertainment media nationally has been 'little more than a pernicious way of attacking Liverpool and its inhabitants' (Crowley 2012: 136). Although characterisations of Scouse identities produced from inside the city are intentionally and customarily exaggerated and humorous, they are rarely understood or received positively by audiences and reviewers from outside of Liverpool.

In his article ‘The construction of images of people and place: Labelling Liverpool and stereotyping Scousers’ (2008),⁴⁷ Boland examines how television dramas and comedies set in Liverpool have especially contributed to how Scouse ‘people and place’ (Boland 2008) are thought of beyond the city. Television programmes including *ℤ Cars* (1962-78), *The Boys from the Blackstuff* (1982) and the long-running soap opera *Brookside* (1982-2003) depicted life in the city with warmth and humour, but as often harsh due to economic adversity.

Liverpool-born screenwriter Carla Lane created two popular sitcoms during the 1970s and 80s, *Liver Birds* (1969-76 and 1996) and *Bread* (1986–91) set in the city, which showed likable, local characters engaged in the everyday struggles of getting by, typically on little financial means. Arguably, some of the most enduring images of Liverpool people and place originate from the films *Educating Rita* (1983) and *Shirley Valentine* (1989), adapted from Liverpool writer Willy Russell’s plays.⁴⁸ These two films featured complex, multifaceted representations of Scouse women in their leading roles, with the two actors, Birmingham-born actor Julie Walters (*Educating Rita*) and Pauline Collins (*Shirley Valentine*) who originates from Devon, receiving academy award nominations for their performances. The character of Rita in *Educating Rita*, an ambitious, genial and funny working-class woman, has particularly influenced an imagining of Scouse-ness more widely.

The presentation of Scouse identities in national and entertainment media, and on television especially, has conditioned national expectations as to what is expected from depictions of Liverpool and of Scouse-ness. Although these cited examples of televisual portrayals of Liverpool people and places are frequently complex, their subtlety exists alongside a tendency to represent the city and its inhabitants as deprived, with Scouse characters who often speak in exaggerated accents and demonstrate a predisposition to violence and lawbreaking. These characters are typically comic, and their representations often nuanced, but some have also been criticised by local people for their hackneyed presentation of Liverpool identity. This includes the caricaturing of Scouse identities, referred to by Belchem as the “‘scouse git’ routine’ (Belchem 2007, 230-1). A frequently

⁴⁷ In *The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*, 25(6), pp. 355-370.

⁴⁸ *Educating Rita* was first produced in 1980 by The Royal Shakespeare Company at The Warehouse theatre (later The Donmar Warehouse) in London, with Julie Walters as Rita. *Shirley Valentine*, originally a one-woman monologue, was commissioned by Glen Walford for The Everyman in 1986 with Noreen Kershaw in the title role. Pauline Collins, who played Valentine in the film, first took on the role in 1988 in a production for the Vaudeville theatre, directed by Simon Callow.

cited example is the *Harry Enfield and Chums*’ (1990-8) long-running sketch *The Scousers*, where men in perm wigs and tracksuits repeatedly yell, ‘Calm down!’.⁴⁹ The sketch has become a go-to comic reference point that is used to insult and negatively stereotype the city’s inhabitants. This also includes, as I will detail in the following subsection, certain stereotypes being repeatedly employed, and sometimes exploited, in the performing of Scouse. These stereotypes, that I have referred to by Liverpool slang terms for man – “Fella”, woman – “Scouse-Bird” and mother – “Mam”, are employed with such regularity that they have evolved as a form of shorthand under which all Scouse identities are encompassed, and therefore limited. Barrett (2016) observes that comparable Scouse characterisations, portrayed in comedies at the Royal Court, are usually recognisable caricatures of working-class local people (Barrett 2016: 230). The parodying of the working-class people and their everyday struggles may be inclusive in its familiarity but is ultimately misrepresentative and sells the community short.⁵⁰ I will show, through the analysis of my case studies, how these stereotypes are perceivable in the presentation of Scouse identities on stage. The reception of these presentations typically differs in the reviews for local and national newspapers. This further demonstrates how assumptions made nationally about Liverpool and Scouse identities have been influenced by the ‘Scouse industry’ (Crowley *ibid*), and that these suppositions consequently affect which Made in Liverpool productions are read as authentic representations of the city and its inhabitants.

2.6.1 Scouse Stereotypes: “Fellas”

In 2.6 I discussed how Scouse has long been associated with an image of the tenacious working-class Scouse male. Barrett (2016) describes this figure as ‘characterised by self-reliance, fierce loyalty, sometime solidarity, and a wiliness born of a struggle to survive’ (Barrett 228: 2016). However, alongside these positive qualities, such Scouse “Fella”

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that Enfield’s *Scousers* were played by Liverpool actors, Mark Moraghan, Gary Bleasdale and Joe McGann (an Everyman stalwart), suggesting some in-joke humour despite it being largely detested in Liverpool.

⁵⁰ Barrett recognises this, noting that when such characters manage to ‘subvert or transform their condition’, it is not through ‘a realisation of their subjugation’ as comedies at the Royal Court are usually recognisable caricatures of working-class local people (Barrett 2016: 230). Instead, the only ways that Scouse identities are shown as resilient or with agency in changing their circumstances is through ‘wily subversion’ (*ibid*).

characters are often represented as violent, criminal and chauvinistic.⁵¹ Case studies including *Paradise Bound* (2006) (Chapter 3, Part 1), *Urban Legend* (2004) (Chapter 5) and *Lost Monsters* (2009) (Chapter 6) all contain characters that embody both the virtues and the vices of the Scouse “Fella”, identifiable through their costuming. Scouse “Fellas” are presented as possessing an exaggerated masculinity, linked to activities also associated with their working-class identity, including having physical jobs, indulging in heavy drinking and having a quickness to violence. These characters are presented as white, costumed for manual labour (high-vis vests, hard hats, painting overalls), or in slovenly designer sportswear.

2.6.2 Scouse Stereotypes: “Mams”

The figure of the working-class matriarch is often used within Liverpool dramas to symbolise security and stability. The image of the mother as a care-giver is bound to a faux-nostalgic image of the city, a vision of a pre-Second World War resilient Liverpool, cobbled streets and large families. These characters typically are presented with little personal agency, their identities only considered in relation to the men in their lives. Within *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008) (Chapter 3, Part 2) and *Hope Place* (Chapter 4) “Mam” characters appear in domestic clothing (aprons and housecoats) while engaged in housekeeping tasks, cleaning and preparing food. These mothers serve as an anchoring point for the extended Scouse family who congregate in one main family home where she lives and provides for them.

2.6.3 Scouse Stereotypes: “Scouse-Birds”

A second, commonly seen type of Scouse women is the “Scouse-Bird” character. Referring to young women as “birds” is widespread in British slang, but “Scouse-Bird” has earned its own distinction, levelled at young, glamorous Liverpool women both inside and outside the city. Liverpool blogger Steph Bannister has taken possession of the term in her popular blog *Scouse Bird Problems*, in which she self-describes as a “Scouse-Bird” and offers grooming and lifestyle tips for others aspiring to that identity. Outside of these examples, in which

⁵¹ Belchem states that Scouse masculinity as personified by Liverpool dockworkers connects to a ‘proud boxing tradition and a shamefully high incidence of domestic violence directed against females’ (Belchem 1997: 112).

Liverpool women use it in reference to themselves and each other, “Scouse-Bird” is applied in a similar vein to the pejorative “Essex Girl”, a slang term that brands women from that area of the U.K as unintelligent, overdressed and promiscuous. “Scouse-Bird” is associated with a similar certain hyper-feminine appearance to that of “Essex Girls”— dyed hair, voluminously blow-dried, fake tan, high heels and pink clothes. The Liverpool term includes specific fashion statements, for instance, the “scouse brow” and wearing hair curlers outside of the house.⁵²

Depictions of Liverpool women on television and in the tabloid press have propagated this modern stereotype. The Channel 4 reality TV series *Desperate Scousewives* (2011-2014) introduced each episode by explaining that ‘looking good’ in order to ‘bag themselves the man of their dreams’ was the key definer of a “Scouse-Bird’s” identity (*Desperate Scousewives* (2011). Such presentation of “Scouse-Birds” is frequently classist. Bannister, under her *Scouse Bird Problems* pseudonym, in an article for *The Guardian* (2011) rejected how Liverpool women were mocked in programmes like *Desperate Scousewives*. She stated that it was false to consider Scouse women’s ‘love of showing off’ as being in any way related to pleasing men, and that to do so was evidence of London snobbery against northern, working-class women (Bannister 2011). I will discuss how characters that fit the “Scouse-Bird” aesthetic in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Scrappers* had certain expected behaviours projected onto them, and what this showed about the preconceptions of the stereotype that exist nationally and locally.

2.7 Conclusion

Liverpool’s sense of place and Scouse identity as detailed in this chapter are not intended to present a singular definition of what Liverpool is or offer a blueprint as to its theatrical presentation. In the following case study chapters, I will show how Scouse identity is presented through scenography in varied ways with different purposes and results. These include visualising Scouse-ness as comedic in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, inspiring in *Eric’s* (2008, Chapter 3, Part 2) and as socially dysfunctional in *Urban Legend*. Scouse is a fluid identity ‘linked to a framework of social identities’ rather than something that one

⁵² A trend for thick, pencilled or even tattooed statement eyebrows that gained popularity in the early 2000s.

either definitively does or doesn't have (Crowley 2012: 100). Although this may make it seemingly more difficult to evidence the visualisation of Scouse on stage, this fluidity actually allows me to move beyond Scouse as limited to being white, working-class, encumbered with social issues and with a self-pitying mindset. Instead, I can widen my lens to include less tangible aspects of Scouse-ness, taking account of how its representation through scenography plays with Scouse humour, tenacity, resilience and wit. How the identity is perceived in theatrical productions, and with what agency, is heavily dependent on the audience. The theatrical presentation of Liverpool and of Scouse identities is therefore complicated within *Made in Liverpool* plays which serve multiple functions. These in-house productions are key to The Everyman and Playhouse's programming in their objective to establish the theatres as accurately reflecting, and as part of, their local community and in promoting their output and Liverpool culture beyond the city.

The staging of Liverpool and Scouse identities draws on the city's history as well as previous depictions of Scouse stereotypes in entertainment and news media. The city has a rich historical, cultural seam, with theatre having long been established as a practice and pastime for Liverpool communities at all levels of economic resources and class. Yet the depiction of Scouse from outside of the city typically only reflects one aspect of the culture as lived and experienced by those for whom it is a daily reality. There are instances where Scouse is also shown as an identity that can be inhabited concurrently with other aspects of self in the same individual including in *The Way Home*, *Paradise Bound* and *3 Sisters on Hope Street*. However, Scouse culture as commonly theatricalised is either shown idealistically through working-class, close-knit families (Chapter 4), or demonised through association with narratives of addiction and violence (Chapter 5).

Scouse-ness, as constructed or performed, is interwoven from many historical and cultural threads. Despite the heterogeneous nature of lived Scouse identities in the city, including individuals who identify as black and Scouse, the tendency is overwhelmingly to show Scouse as white. Scouse is also normally associated with heterosexuality and divided into traditional gender roles. I will discuss how such visualisations of Scouse identities, within *Made in Liverpool* productions, serve to enforce Scouse as a limited identity and to discount its capacity to encompass a much wider, more diverse range of lived experience and cultural expression. I will also demonstrate how these perceived limitations can be discerned from the difference in the reception to such presentations in the national and

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local press. While reviewers writing for platforms outside of the city tend to respond positively to visualisations of Scouse-ness that fit with their expectations, the response in local papers frequently express frustration at the repeated use of stereotypes. Instead, locally, it is complex presentations of Scouse identity, such as showing that to be Scouse and gay (*Paradise Bound*) or Scouse and an intelligent woman (*Scrappers*) is not a contradiction, that are most praised. In the following chapter, I will examine two such complex presentations of Liverpool and Scouse identities in Made in Liverpool productions that were presented as part of a wider political commentary on the city's preparations for its year as the European Capital of Culture.

Chapter 3, Part 1:
Showing Off the City?

They literally just put us to one side, and not just us, the Unity, everybody. We weren't part of showing off the city.

Jo Beddoe 2006

3. Showing off the city?

In this first case study chapter I examine Made in Liverpool productions that occurred during the city's preparation for 2008 - its year as the European Capital of Culture (ECOC). Liverpool's successful bid for the title came in 2003, shortly after the amalgamation of The Everyman and Playhouse under a single artistic directorship and management (2.4). I consider the scenography of other productions during this period elsewhere in this thesis including *The Way Home* (2006) in Chapter 4 and *Unprotected* (2006) in Chapter 5. In this Chapter I specifically examine productions that captured the sense of the city laying the groundwork ahead of the ECOC, contrasted with the year of celebration that followed in 2008 itself. This provides an enlightening comparison in how the theatres shifted their visual presentation of Liverpool and of Scouse identity.

For clarity, I have divided Chapter 3 into two parts. In Part 1, which I have called "Showing off the city?" I examine the scenography of two Made in Liverpool plays, staged at the Everyman by local authors. The first of these is *Paradise Bound* (2006) by Jonathan Larkin and, the second, *Intemperance* (2007) by Lizzie Nunnery. The productions' narratives and designs (by Bob Bailey and Ruairi Murchison, respectively) incorporated implicit and explicit references to the impact the approaching ECOC year was having on Liverpool and local people. I will show how the scenography reflected local unease with how the image of Liverpool was being promoted ahead of the ECOC, with Bailey, and Murchison visualising areas of the city and Scouse identities that locals felt had been forgotten in the supposed regeneration and planned "showing off" of the city.

In Part 2, "Showing off the City: A Move to Celebration", I move focus to the ECOC year in 2008 and two Made in Liverpool productions commissioned as part of its celebrations. These were two musicals: *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008) by Phil Wilmott at the Playhouse and *Eric's* (2008) by Mark Davies Markham at The Everyman. The musicals commemorated the histories of Liverpool institutions, the nightclub Eric's on Matthew Street and the once-imposing Adelphi hotel on Ranelagh Street. The musicals represented a shift from, as I will cover in Part 1, the theatres' programming between 2004 and 2007,

which largely reflected locally held scepticism towards the publicised benefits of the ECOC. The musicals were a change in tone that presented the theatres as part of the whole city being behind the ECOC, an impression that was widely lauded as key to Liverpool's successful bid.⁵³ I will demonstrate how the resurrection of local attractions in designs by Christopher Woods (*Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*) and Soutra Gilmour (*Eric's*) acted as festive monuments to a glorified Liverpool past. The presentation of restored Liverpool sites, that had lost their former significance, was symbolic of the city mourning its loss of global status. My analysis also identifies how the reception of these 2008 shows was revelatory in terms of the two-way relationship between the visualisation of Scouse stereotypes and national expectations of Liverpool identities and experience.

In *Performing Nostalgia* (1996) Susan Bennett calls on theatre historians to continuously question who is in control of a theatre's cultural policy. Bennett's book specifically refers to the responsibilities of historians studying Shakespeare, but her comments have relevance in considering the challenges faced by The Everyman and Playhouse between 2003 and 2008. It has always been necessary that these regional theatres consider national opinion, but this was especially amplified during the ECOC period. During this time Liverpool and the city's cultural output was subject to a global gaze. This consequently resulted in value judgments being made from outside of the city throughout the bid process, during the event itself and on the ECOC's subsequent impact. My examination of Liverpool City Council (LCC) documentation relating to the bid process revealed that The Everyman and Playhouse were not initially considered part of Liverpool's cultural landscape despite their histories and enduring popularity.⁵⁴ This was indicative of how work with local themes was largely constituted as outside of what the executing LCC recognised as 'world class' (ibid) and therefore appropriate for "showing off the city". Yet, the 2008 musicals that I analyse in this chapter were widely described in local media, post the event, as highlights of the ECOC year. Despite such plaudits, why particular productions were singled out for praise, and where, in local or national press, was revealing and I will argue, likely influential on what images and stereotypes of the city and its inhabitants persist.

⁵³ Widely reported as the comment of Sir Jeremy Isaacs, chair of the panel of ECOC independent judges (Anon 2003a)

⁵⁴ *European Capital of Culture 2008 bid document*, [Compact Disc], 2003, LCC reference, 942.753 LIV.

3.1 Scouse Identity and the ECOC

The LCC saw the city being awarded the ECOC as an opportunity to address persistent images and opinions of Liverpool. The political and economic details of Liverpool's ECOC strategy, outside of theatre, are beyond the scope of this thesis but several studies have been invaluable in clarifying the wider context of the LCC's cultural policy. Liverpool's bid process, artistic programming and public reception of the ECOC has been covered in PhDs by Mark Connolly (2007), David O'Brien (2009) Susan Fitzpatrick (2010) and Peter Campbell (2011). Their works represent a comprehensive review of the council's approach and of locals' dissatisfaction with the marketing of the city's tourist attractions and cultural assets. In turn, these studies give me a thorough context within which to examine *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*'s political positions on these issues and how this was reflected in their scenography. Of particular interest to my study is Louise Platt's PhD *Performing Local Identities: Liverpool and the European Capital of Culture* (2010) and her article *Liverpool 08 and the Performativity of Identity* (2011). Platt's work contextualises the ECOC as a period of change, an opportunity for the city to re-invent itself, change perceptions and promote Liverpool culture nationally and abroad (Platt 2010: 228). The case studies considered in this chapter demonstrate The Everyman and Playhouse's awareness of this potential and suggest a desire to assert their theatres as beacons of local culture.

In order to show how the case studies mirrored Liverpool's objectives to change perceptions during this period, it is necessary to briefly outline the LCC's goals and the subsequent cultural programme for the ECOC. In securing the title, it was hoped that Liverpool would finally be able to distance itself from its national 'negative urban image' (Connolly 2007: 223). The EU committee stressed from the outset that Liverpool winning the bid⁵⁵ would be an opportunity for the city to re-brand and increase its economic and commercial prospects.⁵⁶ Joe Riley (2004) claimed in the *Liverpool Echo* that the ECOC

⁵⁵ The Capital of Culture bid process consists of pre-selected countries putting forward cities to be considered by EU committee. In 2003 for 2008 the two countries were the U.K. and Norway. The UK's initial twelve cities put forward in 2000 were Belfast, Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Canterbury, Cardiff, Inverness, Liverpool, Newcastle/Gateshead, Oxford and Norwich. The shortlist consisted of Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford and Newcastle/Gateshead.

⁵⁶ Liverpool was hoping to replicate the success of Glasgow's hosting of the ECOC (1990). Glasgow received £43 million in investments and the year led to the rejuvenation of many cultural spaces and new partnerships (Jones & Wilks-Heeg 2004: 342). However, it was

would see Liverpool get priority funding from the Arts Council with a rise of 20% in overall financial backing for cultural events. Further, he postulated that 38 regular funding beneficiaries (including The Everyman and Playhouse) would see their grant rise from £5.3 million to £6.5 million by 2006 (Riley 2004). However, London-based coverage of Liverpool's bid was cynical as to whether the city was capable of delivering what was understood as the high culture required for the ECOC title. Simon Hoggart's comments in *The Guardian* (2003) were typical of sentiments that regarded Liverpool's cultural attractions as limited. He depicted a cultured day out in the city as beginning and ending with a trip to the Walker Art Gallery, punctuated only with lunch and a stop at the Cavern club (known for its hosting of The Beatles) (Hoggart 2003). By restricting his imagined visit only to institutions whose offerings were historical, Hoggart implied that contemporary Liverpool had little to offer.

Though local reception to Liverpool's winning bid was overwhelmingly positive there was apprehension regarding the restrictions of the festivities, and the ECOC's long term ability to regenerate the city (Anon 2003b). Residents of less well-off communities, often on the edges of the city, expressed concern that the ECOC only benefitted centrally dwelling, better-off residents who were able to enjoy the free spectacles on offer. It was widely felt that the council's financial predictions were optimistic and that regeneration plans were concentrated on the city centre, neglecting some of the city's most deprived areas (Connolly 2007, O'Brien 2009). These included the majority working-class communities of North Liverpool and specifically the docklands and inner-city districts of Bootle and Dingle, where *Urban Legend* (2004, Chapter 5) and *Paradise Bound* are set. These anxieties were reflected in Made in Liverpool works that critiqued the ECOC as excluding these communities, and which highlighted areas and people who had felt invisible in the ECOC's marketing. Productions including *Urban Legend* and *Paradise Bound*, as well as *Kindness of Strangers* (2004), *The Way Home* and *Unprotected* (2006), visualised a Liverpool that

criticised for a lack of legacy which Liverpool was keen to avoid. Although the focus was primarily on how the 'Glasgow effect' could be replicated through urban development, cultural regeneration with increased community participation was recognised as a vital component in order to reposition Liverpool as a world-class city by 2008' (Liverpool Culture Company 2004:15). Cultural regeneration was a buzzword across the UK particularly post 2005 and London's successful bid for the 2012 Olympics. The proximity of the two major events meant that Liverpool could not rely on much financial support or marketing from London.

locals felt had been forsaken in order to appear palatable under the global attention brought about by the ECOC award. Such designs were frank in their depiction of the city's urban poverty. The included debate-provoking images of issues affecting local communities including racism (*Kindness of Strangers*), drugs (*Urban Legend*) and prostitution (*Unprotected*). In the event year of 2008 the tenor of the Made in Liverpool productions changed significantly. The musicals examined in Part 2, alongside *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008, Chapter 4) focused on the glories of the city's past instead of taking a critical lens on its present. I consider this change, which I will examine further in Part 2, a transfer of focus intended to reposition the theatres as an integral part of the festivities.

3.1.1 The Everyman and Playhouse and the ECOC

The theatres' complex relationship with the ECOC was foregrounded in their being omitted from the LCC's initial application and bid. No plans or promotion for any Liverpool theatre was present in the 2003 bid documents (Sadiq, Walker, Hutton & Artis 2003). The *2005 – 2006 Delivery Plan* (2003) included several independent, community theatrical projects but Liverpool theatres as a whole were notable by their absence.⁵⁷ Their omission may have been due to the bid's emphasis on business and urban regeneration projects rather than arts and culture (Connolly 2007: 34). However, it is logical that the council overlooked Liverpool's theatres due their being singled out as a weak spot by the ECOC awarding body. It was widely reported that ECOC judge Sir Jeremy Isaacs described theatre in the city as '...in need of a shakeup' (Isaacs in the *Liverpool Echo* 2004c). The Everyman and Playhouse therefore were under pressure to appeal locally whilst making sure that their productions answered Isaacs' concerns by gaining favourable national press.

The Everyman and Playhouse's initial exclusion, followed by this requirement to raise their standard, was keenly felt. It was seen as rejection by the LCC of the theatres' worth, influenced more by the value judgements of outsiders than by local opinion. This was

⁵⁷ The community projects included a £100,000 puppetry installation project based on Liverpool's maritime history to tour Merseyside schools called the 'Friend-Ship' and a £55,000 'Theatre in the Parks' project (Liverpool Culture Company 2004: 26). Neither of these projects are mentioned again in delivery plan or subsequent impact minutes or documentation, perhaps confirming that local people were right to be suspicious of Liverpool City Council's predictions in the lead up to the ECOC.

expressed by then artistic director (1999-2003) Jo Beddoe in her interview with Ros Merkin (2006). Beddoe stated that how the theatres were treated by the LCC felt like a snub, especially coming so soon after the Playhouse and Everyman's amalgamation.

...We [The Everyman and Playhouse] were saying look at what you [the LCC] have saved, what we have brought back and the story. They literally just put us to one side, and not just us, The Unity, everybody. We weren't part of showing off the city. (Beddoe 2006)

The decision of the LCC that the theatres did not merit 'showing off the city' was evidence that The Everyman and Playhouse's output had been judged as not of a high enough standard for the ECOC programme. The theatres were deemed 'no longer fit for purpose' (*Liverpool Echo* 2003)⁵⁸. When Gemma Bodinetz and Deborah Aydon took over the theatres in 2003, they attempted to address the council's discounting of the theatres contribution. As I established in 2.4, Bodinetz and Aydon's appointment was in part due to their planned 'all consuming' programme of shows leading up to 2008 (Aydon in Merkin 2011: 234). This included 'doubling the programme' with a focus on in-house productions, especially those which came under the Made in Liverpool branding.

A dilemma was created by this vision in that work which was nationally considered appropriate for Liverpool to showcase under global attention did not habitually centre experiences of the city and/or Scouse identities. Reflective coverage of theatre and performance post 2008 reveals a preference for big budget works produced by artists from outside of the city, and which focused on global themes. The *Impacts 08* (Garcia, Melville, & Cox 2010) report only included The Everyman's *King Lear* (2008) in the same 'World Class' (Garcia, Melville, & Cox 2010:36) category as the mechanical spider puppet *La Princesse* (La Machine) and London company dreamthinkspeak's installation in the Anglican cathedral. The dramatic designs of these theatrical events contributed to their 'world-class' (ibid) designation.⁵⁹ The appreciation of these high production values potentially buried any recognition of subtler yet still inventive scenography. This emerges in my consideration of the press reception to my case studies. I uncover where national publications appear to

⁵⁸Press File relating to The Everyman and Playhouse and The ECOC: EVT/PC/000091

⁵⁹ Giles Cadle's set for *King Lear* featured a rainstorm with real water pouring from the grid, that covered the whole of the stage.

make judgements as to what aesthetics are appropriate for locally focussed work through their critique of the scenography.

The Everyman and Playhouse under such scrutiny, needed to produce work that appealed locally and was seen as being suitably ambitious and outward looking to receive acclaim from outside of the city. They were also expected to produce these high standards on limited funding. Throughout the theatres' histories, a paucity of funding has directly affected their ambitions, including design and production values (see 2.2, 2.3). During the ECOC preparations and event, the theatres faced pressure to do a lot on very little. In *The Stage* (2002) LCC councillor Frank Doran accused the theatres of 'ignoring the community' by not programming enough '...homegrown shows' (Doran 2002 in Merkin 2004: 282).⁶⁰ Doran suggests that this lack of 'the type of theatre people want' (ibid) was a question of artistic policy, however this is refuted by Beddoe in her interview with Merkin (2005). Instead, Beddoe (2005) claims it was insufficient funding that forced her to dramatically scale back her ambitions for the inaugural post-amalgamation season at The Everyman and Playhouse. Beddoe had proposed that the theatres would produce ten in-house shows a year but when faced with the financial reality was forced to reduce that number to six (Beddoe 2005). Aydon and Bodinetz encountered the same frustrations as Beddoe, stating on their takeover that the theatres' then funding did '...not fulfil our ambition or the needs of the people we serve' (Bodinetz in *Liverpool Echo* 2003).⁶¹ As well as being underfunded at a local level Aydon suggested that the overlooking of the theatres' contribution was a national issue. In *Liverpool Playhouse: a theatre and its city*, Merkin quotes Aydon as commenting '...the arts council had a little list of theatres to be allowed to fail' (Aydon in Merkin 2011: 234). Therefore, the need for the national recognition that could be potentially procured through reviews in countrywide publications was particularly vital during the ECOC period.

The Everyman and Playhouse's decision to concentrate on work about and set in Liverpool in the run up to, and event of the ECOC was ultimately a success. Post 2008 press cited the theatres' Made in Liverpool productions as highlights, including Paul Allen's round-up

⁶⁰ Frank Doran served as Lord Mayor of Liverpool between 1996-7. He was a councillor for the ward of Kensington and Fairfield on LCC between 2003 and 2005, and again in 2008.

⁶¹ Press File relating to The Everyman and Playhouse and The ECOC: EVT/PC/000091.

article for *The Guardian* ‘Liverpool 2008: how was it for you?’ (2008). The theatres underwent a change in status, from omitted to included, and finally applauded. This period thus marked a reconsideration locally and nationally of The Everyman and Playhouse’s role in the construction of marketable images of Liverpool and Scouse identities.

3.1.2 Made in Liverpool Productions during the ECOC

In addition to the case studies considered within this double chapter, The Everyman and Playhouse produced 12 further Made in Liverpool plays between 2004 and 2008. Some of these, including *The Way Home* (2006), *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008) (Chapter 4) and *Urban Legend* (2004) and *Unprotected* (2006) (Chapter 5) are considered elsewhere in this thesis. There is an observable difference in tone between the case studies of Chapter 2, Part 1 and Chapter 3, Part 2. In order to contextualise this, I here consider the shift in mood from the type of Made in Liverpool work produced in the lead up to the ECOC, compared to within the 2008 event year itself.

Between 2004 and 2007, The Everyman and Playhouse produced a run of works whose narratives related to social issues in the city which the council was not eager to highlight in their ECOC marketing.⁶² Alongside *Urban Legend*, *The Way Home*, and *Unprotected*, this included *The Kindness of Strangers* which spotlighted refugees and slum landlords in the city. The scenography of these productions visualised an urban Liverpool of concrete tower blocks and dimly lit, danger filled streets. Their themes of social unrest and crime were set against an aesthetic of neglect far removed from the glossy new city and green spaces prevalent in ECOC marketing. I explore this dark, urban scenography and its problematic relationship with perceived gritty realism further in Chapter 5, but it bears establishing here to provide background to the examination of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*.

In 2008, the case study musicals were flanked by classics that had been given a local twist. These included *3 Sisters on Hope Street* - a twist of *Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov, an adaption of Molière’s *Tartuffe* (2008) by local Merseybeat poet Roger McGough and *King*

⁶² Notable exceptions to this were the two comedies *The Morris* (2004) and *The Flint Street Nativity* (2006)

Lear with Everyman veteran Pete Postlethwaite in the title role.⁶³ The design of these productions featured elaborate sets and costumes but with little or no specific affiliation visually to Liverpool. Instead they presented known works through a Liverpool lens. Their Liverpool settings, language or well-known faces customised productions that would have already been familiar to wider audiences. In Chapter 3, Part 2, I examine how, in this apparent striving for mass appeal, the designers of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* handled their Liverpool settings. Further, I assess what resultant scenography implied as to how the theatres wanted to present the city and Scouse identity.

3.2 Design of *Paradise Bound* (2006)

Paradise Bound was Larkin's first play and premiered at The Everyman on the 28 April 2006, directed by Sue Dunderdale and designed by Bob Bailey. The cast included well-known local actors Kerry Peers (Ann) from *Brookside* and Michael Ryan (Danny) who had performed in many productions at local theatres. The plot follows Anthony's (Ciaran Griffiths) struggle to come out to his friend Danny. The play is set in Dingle between a patch of synthetic turf where Danny is erecting a fence as part of an ECOC regeneration project, and at Dannels' mum's (Ann) home. Ann and her friend Kathleen (Mary Jo Randle) spend a lot of time at Anns' kitchen table, getting ready for nights out, comparing hangovers and talking about trivia whilst avoiding big, uncomfortable topics. The characters were presented as working-class men and women through their voice (the script is written in phonetic pronunciation) and costumes which adhered to the "Fella" and "Mam" Scouse stereotypes that I introduced in 2.6.1 and 2.6.2. Bailey's design adhered to the setting directions in Larkin's 2006 text which, as I discussed in 1.4, makes knowing what visual decisions were made by Bailey, and what was required by Larkin impossible to discern. An exception to Larkin's instructions was that Bailey's design remained unchanged throughout the play, with time passing indicated by costume changes. Larkin's directions (2006) refer to '...more fencing appearing in scene 10' (Larkin 2006: 84) to further close in the stage. Larkin also stipulates the presence of a bench that becomes more vandalised over the course of the play (ibid, p.2). As this increased fencing and bench are not visible in any of the production photographs, I have assumed that this change was ignored by Bailey.

⁶³ Postlethwaite regularly performed at the Everyman in the 1970s as part of the resident company.

Bailey's full design can be seen in fig. 2, although the back wall is mostly in darkness. The positions from which Stephen Vaughn's production photographs appear to have been taken suggest that *The Everyman* was organised in its standard thrust configuration. Bailey divided the downstage into two sections with stage right loosely designated as a kitchen and stage left as a living room (fig.2).⁶⁴ The living room space also served as a playing field. This division was shown by different flooring; a tiled effect indicating the kitchen, and floral green carpet doubling as the living room floor and the outside AstroTurf. The carpet extended vertically up the back wall of *The Everyman* to a secondary level that the actors could sit or stand on as if it was a low wall (fig. 3).



Fig 2. Production photograph for *Paradise Bound* (2006), Scene 1, L to R: Kathleen (Mary Jo Randle), Ann (Kerry Peers), Danny (Michael Ryan), Anthony (Ciaran Griffiths), (Vaughn 2006)

⁶⁴ Digital Production Photographs - *Paradise Bound*, [Compact Disc], Photographer Stephen Vaughn, 2006, EVT reference, EVT/AV/000091.



Fig 3. Production photograph for *Paradise Bound* (2006), Scene 5, Danny and Anthony (Vaughn 2006)

Behind the extended vertical of the floor was the exposed black brick wall of the theatre covered with a poster advertising a new development of luxury flats with ‘YOUR FUTURE, NOW’ written in metre-high capital letters. This slogan, with its command like wording and immediacy, instructed the play’s characters that this was their moment to seize their destiny. Yet, the positioning of this potential, advertised ‘FUTURE’ (behind the grid fence) and its prohibitive price (£149,995) visualised it as out of reach. The poster was partially obscured by a grid fence whose outline replicated the Liverpool skyline with the silhouettes of the three graces (iconic buildings in the city), made clear by their being topped with wire models of the Liver Bird.⁶⁵ Bailey’s inclusion of the oversized poster showed the new hope promised by ECOC as very physically present but unobtainable. The fence, which Danny was responsible for erecting, served to keep locals off the new fake grass, literally fencing them off from an ECOC regeneration project. I shall examine how these design features symbolised the way the lived experience of Dingle was being altered

⁶⁵ A ‘Liver Bird’ is a bird, most commonly thought to be a cormorant, that has represented Liverpool since the medieval period. Due to the breed of the bird being unknown, it has come to be thought of as a mythical creature, unique to the city.

by the physical regenerations caused by the ECOC, and its emotional impact on those communities further in 3.5.

The space was also bisected by fake girders, as if left there from a building site, which were used as practical stage furniture (fig. 2). The substitution of construction materials for furniture extended to the kitchen table which resembled a large depleted spool, such as one that might have held cables or wires. The actors interacted with these surreal set pieces as if they were not incongruous with the realistic domestic setting; sitting on the girders and carpeted wall, eating at the giant reel. The design was simultaneously life-like, negotiated by the performers as if it was in no way remarkable – and interpretative. The characters' home was being physically intersected by building site debris, presumably from the ECOC regeneration works. In 3.5, I explore this overlapping and its significance in the production presenting a critical perspective on the ECOC developments.

3.3 Design of *Intemperance* (2007)

Intemperance was Lizzie Nunnery's, first professional production, premiering at the Everyman on the 21 September 2007, directed by Bodinetz. It marked the beginning of an ongoing relationship between Nunnery, a graduate of The Everyman and Playhouse young writers' group, and the theatres, leading to further productions *Narvik* (2015) (Chapter 6) *Swallowing Dark* (2011) and *The Sum* (2017). The play follows the fortunes of 19th century slum dwellers: pregnant Millie (Brid Brennan), her husband Brynjar (Kristofer Gummerus), her father Fergal (Brendan Conroy) and her teenage children from a previous relationship: Ruairi (Matthew Dunphy) and Niamh (Emily Taffe). The family are so poor that they live in a cellar apartment not much more than a hole in the ground (Nunnery 2007: 103) and, apart from Brynjar, all have issues with violence and alcohol. Brynjar is a Norwegian immigrant who has stayed in Liverpool for the love of Millie rather than continuing on to New York as was his original plan. He maintains an optimism that their situation will improve, that the rest of the family, seemingly resigned to their life of squalor, regularly disparage.



Fig. 4. Production photograph for *Intemperance* (2006), Act 1, Scene 5, L to R: Fergal (Brendan Conroy), Niamh (Emily Taffe), Brynjar (Kristofer Gummerus), (Brid Brennan), (Day 2006)



Fig. 5. Production photograph for *Intemperance* (2006), Act 1, Scene 2, L to R: Fergal, Millie, Brynjar (Day 2006)

There may appear to be a contradiction in discussing the characters of Millie and her family (excluding Brynjar) as embodying Scouse identities as the text casts them as second-generation Irish immigrants. However, there is a strong connection between Scouse identity and the mass Irish immigration to Liverpool that occurred in the 19th century. In *Irish Catholic and Scouse* (2007) John Belchem states that ‘scouse’ entered general use after the First World War and was ‘...coined along the main artery of Irish Liverpool’, (Belchem 2007: 322). By this, Belchem refers to emergence of ‘scouse’ (ibid) to describe inhabitants of the Scotland Road area of the city who were typically of Irish descent. The visual and characterisation decisions made by Nunnery, Bodinetz, Murchison and the actors saw these characters presented as forerunners to Scouse-ness. Millie and her family symbolised the ancestors from which modern Scouse identities had descended. These theatricalised progenitors of Scouse identity held up a mirror to their modern-day counterparts. This resonance was reinforced by the play being set during a period in the city’s history of a great deal of new development, including the building of St George’s Hall. This regeneration mirrored that occurring in 2007 ahead of the ECOC, including in that, despite its intent to rejuvenate the city, it offered little improvement to Liverpool’s poorest. In showing how families such as Millies’ were marginalised from the city’s revitalisation, *Intemperance* examined many of the issues of the ECOC through the lens of the past. Whilst the spatial overlap in *Paradise Bound* had been explicit (the building site intersecting the Dingle living room), *Intemperance* implied a temporal overlay. I will examine these two forms of layering, one obvious and one implicit further in 3.5.

Though The Everyman stage was set up in standard thrust, Murchison’s set mainly utilised the downstage area. This created the impression of a fourth-wall box set compared to the Baileys’ more open perimeter in *Paradise Bound*. Murchison presented the cellar as a grimy single room. He divided the space with a slim pillar and curtain which separated upstage stage right as the sleeping area. The walls were textured, with grey brickwork, and low-set arched porticos upstage. This was reminiscent of the arched brickwork in sewers, creating a visual association between the cellar and unpleasant subterranean spaces. Robert Day’s production photographs⁶⁶ do not show the beer bottles hanging from the cellar’s ceiling, but their presence was confirmed by Murchison in his interview (2016). I question their

⁶⁶ Digital Production Photographs *Intemperance*, [Compact Disc], Photographer Robert Day, 2007, EVT reference, EVT/AV/000116.

potential symbolism in 3.6. The stage furniture consisted of a working piano along the back wall, a central wooden table, crates and buckets. Ropes, which Millie unpicks as a meagre source of income, were also scattered across the playing space. Murchison employed a sepia palette, extending to the rough, period costumes. The costumes were broken down and the actors' faces dirtied and hair unravelled so that they appeared sweaty and sullied. The floor was textured to replicate exposed, bare earth which dirtied the hems of the women's dresses and the actors' bare feet (fig. 5). Murchison further demonstrated the squalor of the family by the use of brown sackcloth for sleeping blankets and wall-coverings.

The setting of the Victorian slum showed a similar, though extreme, segregation as in *Paradise Bound*. The degrading social exclusion of the family as underclass was symbolised by them having to live in the dirt below 19th century Liverpool's urban and industrial development. The subterranean position of the space was emphasised by the inclusion of a high window, looking out onto street level. In fig. 4, stairs can be glimpsed through the upstage doorway presumably leading up to the street. Paul Keogan's lighting design highlighted these stairs by a relatively tightly focused beam which cut through the otherwise warm, murky lighting that washed the stage in russet tones. This suggested something better beyond the cellar, a bright ray of hope for the family's future. Yet, the family's poverty was directly linked to their values and vices, making that path-of-light exit potentially readable as something they would have to earn. Scouse identities are often seen as having little respect for authority and morality, and so ultimately are held responsible for their own tribulations.

3.4 Marketing of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*

For *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*, being set in precise Liverpool locations was seen to bestow the productions with a perceived authenticity that was stressed in the shows' marketing. Murchison and Bailey's designs did not use street names or maps to demonstrate locations, (as in the case studies of Chapter 4) but included indications that would likely be familiar to local people (such as the Liver Bird silhouettes of *Paradise Bound*). However, separated from the dialogue, the precise areas of Liverpool where these plays were set would not have necessarily been discernible from their designs without the accompanying marketing which anchored the plays to their real-life settings.

Larkin gave an exact location as the inspiration for *Paradise Bound* in an interview for LGBTQ documentary *Pink: Past & Present* (2013). He explained how the play was inspired by his having seen a patch of artificial turf covering a space previously occupied by a demolished building, decorated with a sign reading ‘Regenerating the Dingle’. He described how the city changed in the lead up to the ECOC; “skyscrapers were shooting [and] new apartments ... Liverpool one was being built” (Larkin 2013). Yet, these changes were restricted to the town centre. In less affluent areas like Dingle “...nothing was happening” (ibid). These Liverpool boroughs felt judged as to their perceived merit. Districts, including Dingle, believed that they had been purposefully left out of the ECOC benefits and celebrations due to their being found wanting by these judgements.⁶⁷

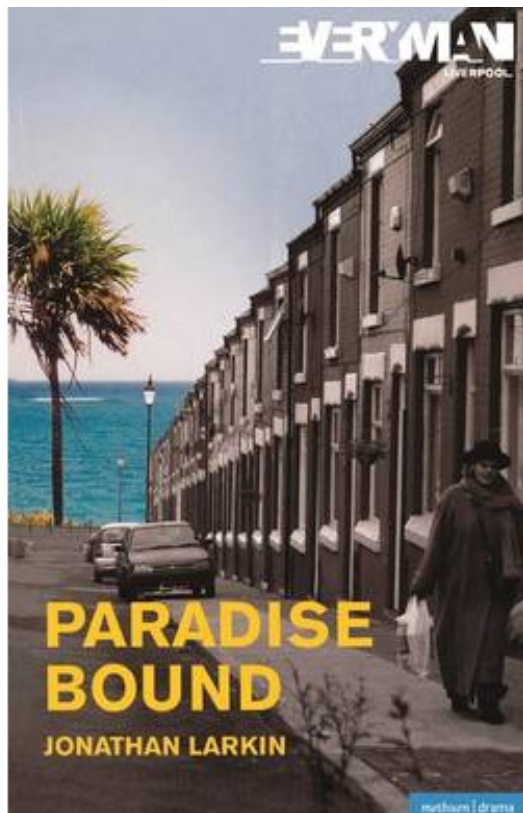


Fig. 6. Cover of *Paradise Bound* (2006),
(Peschier 2018)



Fig. 7. Promotional image *Intemperance* (2007),
L to R Brynjar, Ruairi’ (Matthew Dunphy),
Millie, Fergal’, Niamh
(Unknown 2007)

⁶⁷ The perception of Dingle an undesirable area of Liverpool, and how this opinion is contradicted by those who live there is considered within Louise Platt’s thesis (Platt 2011: 186). Platt draws on David Hall’s study of Dingle referenced in ‘Images of the City’ (2003: 191-210)

Such questioning as to whether the ECOC truly represented regeneration for marginalised areas formed a key part of both plays' marketing. The leading press image for *Paradise Bound* and subsequent cover of the published script (Larkin 2006) is a photographic collage showing a street of terraced houses trudged by a woman in a housecoat with her shopping (fig.6).⁶⁸ Though apparently a modern image (it included a satellite dish and plastic shopping bags) the photograph's sepia filter made it seem far older. This conflict of a contemporary scene doctored to seem old was complicated further by the offsetting of the street with a light sky, palm trees and distant bright blue ocean. This collage of an overcast Dingle with imagery familiar from holiday advertisements, questioned if the ECOC developments were truly transforming deprived areas of Liverpool for the better.

Intemperance also claimed to be based on a real-life location, stated in the script as: 'Liverpool, September 1854, Hockenhall Court, off Dale Street, A cellar room leading to slum court' (Nunnery 2007: 7). Although Murchison confirmed in his interview that the setting was not based on any physical place, the "real-life" source of the play was heavily marketed (National Museums of Liverpool 2016). This indicates that a "true" history was perceived as important in legitimising the play's depiction of the divisive effects of the city's regeneration. This included mapping the production onto the city's historic streets through walking tours before matinee performances. These tours featured locations, both real and speculative⁶⁹ from references in the play. The archive also includes promotional photographs⁷⁰ of the costumed actors posing on Leather Lane in Liverpool (fig. 6), using the historic street as a real-Liverpool backdrop for the fictional world of the play. Such

⁶⁸ Handbill – *Paradise Bound*, [Printed Material], 2006, EVT reference, EVT/PR/000426. Development towards the image can be found in: Draft artwork – *Paradise Bound*, Printed Material, 2006, EVT reference, EVT/PF/002416

⁶⁹ The Hockenhall alley denoted in the setting directions is notable in having once been the living area for 19th century workers. Nunnery may have picked the specific location for the family's slum as an 1884 warehouse survives as Grade II-listed building on the site. Whilst not a slum court, this would have given audience members a real life location that they could visit and relate to the production. I cannot say for sure whether the Hockenhall alley was included on the walking tours but they did visit other landmarks and streets mentioned in the play such as the now closed centres of industry including The Liverpool, London and the Globe Building on Dale Street. See: Press Review Pack: EVT reference, EVT/PR/000469

⁷⁰ Digital Promotional Photographs - *Intemperance*, [Compact Disc], Photographer Unknown, 2007, EVT reference, EVT/AV/000117

publicity demonstrated how important *Intemperance's* perceived historical accuracy was in advertising the production. With the walking tours and staged photographs, the theatres could almost be said to have been creating secondary performances that blended the reality of the city's topography with imagined events. By audiences being able to "visit" locations from the play, and the characters spilling out of the theatre space onto modern streets, the divide between real and theatricalised Liverpool was, if in a relatively small way, destabilised. Fictional characters and locations (or places no longer present such as Dale Street Bank) were intermingled with real, contemporary places. This blurred the line between the historical social disjuncture presented in *Intemperance* and that which the city was encountering in the run up to its 2008 year as the ECOC.

Though essentially a historical drama, *Intemperance's* promotion was very explicit as to its links with the ECOC. In an interview for the *Liverpool Echo* (2007a), Aydon described the play as signalling that the Everyman and Playhouse were '...addressing and answering the criticism' made by communities who felt excluded from the ECOC. She added that in doing so, the theatres were staging the '...sort of work that Liverpool wants to see' (Aydon in Riley 2007a). Her comments confirm my proposition that the theatres were aiming to align themselves with the scepticism of local people, rather than with the indiscriminate enthusiasm being pushed as the official narrative by the council. By showing that they recognised local cynicism towards the ECOC proposals, the theatres were presenting themselves as part of that local community as opposed to being part of the top-down, selling of Liverpool culture as represented by the ECOC propaganda.

3.5 Layered scenography in "showing off the city?"

As well as the inequity of the ECOC regeneration projects, a criticism widely levelled at the LCC of 2008 was that rather than having revitalised the city's image of Liverpool, the council had sanitised it. From the 2003 bid preparations onwards, Liverpool was actively repackaged by the LCC, and the cultural company subcommittee, in an act of place marketing. Phillip Boland (2008) has defined 'place marketing' as a deliberate move from the generic selling of a place in the tourist and business economies, to a branding exercise rooted in a specific time/space. Preparations for the ECOC involved developing a 'a specific local brand for Liverpool in order for the city to stand out and compete for the title '...in the global arena.' (Boland 2008: 356). Such branding can be problematic in its

eradication of culture that doesn't fit its remit. Paul Jones and Stuart Wilks-Heeg, in their article 'Capitalising Culture: Liverpool 2008' (2004), discussed how the city's self-branding itself risked cultural homogenization. They highlighted '...a very real danger that culture will effectively mean official culture' where any 'culture' (ibid) that did not fit the LCC's parameters would be rejected (Jones & Wilks-Heeg 2004: 353). In seeking mass appeal, the council was seen by local people as obscuring less fortunate areas (focusing on removal rather than repair) and the working-class Scouse culture they represented. *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* drew attention to such Scouse culture, using local knowledge, staging and marketing to emphasise the connection of the dramas to the city.

The scenography of these productions showed the impact of the ECOC as woven into the everyday lives of the characters, prioritising their perspectives. In particular *Paradise Bound* presented a conflict as to who had final authorship of Liverpool space: those that were selling it or those that lived it. Parallels can be drawn between Boland's (2013) observations of local people seeking to reclaim their space from the official narrative of the ECOC and the scenography of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*. The quoted speech within the title of Boland's article "'Capital of Culture – you must be having a laugh!" Challenging the official rhetoric of Liverpool as the 2008 European cultural capital' (2010), is taken from a graffiti-ed flag that was erected on a tower block in Toxteth. In this article, Boland examines how locals' experiences of Liverpool and their sense of ownership manifested in the lead up to the ECOC through acts of resistance. Boland saw this homemade sign as a counter to the official ECOC flags that decorated the city centre. Instead of covering up the city's problems (e.g. a rundown tower block), the handmade banner drew attention to them. Boland used this image to illustrate how locals were countering the council's narrative of Liverpool as a '...global city with international significance' through mockery and highlighting their own experience (Boland 2010: 631). A similar visual strategy can be observed in the set design of *Paradise Bound* where locals own experience of the ECOC (discarded girders) was symbolically shown as directly countering the council's propaganda (the poster advertising the new flats).

The construction paraphernalia being present and inharmonious with the domestic space symbolised how the ECOC works⁷¹ were intruding on families, like those depicted by the characters, in an insidious way. The effects of the ECOC were shown as being an intrusion into family life by the building-site debris being incorporated into the domestic furniture. By this double-use, the girders being used as seating in fig. 2, the set design layered the space. Bailey presented a visual metaphor of the ECOC's disruption, while the characters interacted as if they were in a realistic living room. The characters' living amongst the fallout of the building site signified how Dingle residents only suffered the inconvenience of ECOC developments rather than their benefits. This was emphasised by their separation from the advertised regeneration of the city by Bailey's use of the grid fence. Dingle was shown as restricted and apportioned off from the rest of the city. This is reflected in Larkin's dialogue where Kathleen describes the fence as marking the exclusion of people like her from the ECOC.

Kathleen: No, they [Liverpool council] threw us a bench. Then they said, 'oh no, yer can't even 'ave that, yer can look at it through this nice bit of corrugated iron. That you have to put up. Ann reckons they're gonna move that Chinatown arch across the middle of the road, then block it off so we can't get through (Larkin 2006: 104)

Kathleen's comments show the depth of her cynicism as to the council's motivations and her belief that Dingle was being purposefully excluded. She reports that Ann believes that the council is so against their inclusion that they would turn an icon of local identity (the Chinatown arch) into a physical barrier to keep them out. This was echoed in the design with Bailey's outlining of the Three Graces in the fence. This piece of set took a Liverpool landmark and utilised it as part of what was keeping Dingle out of the ECOC. By taking such icons that would traditionally be thought of nationally and globally as representative of Liverpool and repurposing them in text and scenography as obstructive, *Paradise Bound* played with the national understanding of landmarks of Liverpool identity. It demonstrated whilst such emblems were known nationally (and remained popular with the local community), the co-opting of them by the ECOC marketing machine changed them to symbols without substance.

⁷¹ Even for local audiences not familiar with Dingle, the playing field regeneration would have brought to mind similar schemes that had caused major changes to the city's landscape such as 'The Big Dig' road redevelopment and Liverpool One shopping precinct.

The scenography of *Paradise Bound* created a version of Dingle as a specific case-study for areas neglected by the ECOC; those areas that it appeared the council would rather conceal than support. The theatrical layering of a family narrative and the effects of the ECOC represents what Doreen Massey (2005) terms a ‘thrown togetherness’ (Massey 2005: 140). Massey describes the ‘human and non-human’ interrelations in this ‘thrown togetherness’ as being what creates the ‘event of place’ (ibid). This is an experiencing of a place as it is in that moment, with an awareness of what has gone before and what might be to come, for both the physical landscape and those within it. Bailey’s scenography created a similar ‘event of place’ (ibid) for the audience. His set design for *Paradise Bound* was realistic and abstract. Elements showed the Dingle’s present and hinted at possible futures as the city moved towards 2008. Bailey’s organisation of space was fundamental in how it conditioned the audience’s understanding of the characters’ relationships to one another, to where they live and their subsequent comprehension of Scouse-ness. The design incorporated multiple layers of space whilst still maintaining a sense of place by stratifying the representative (interior and exteriors of Dingle) with the figurative (the city as a site of building and renovation). Bailey’s scenographic approach to *Paradise Bound* combined recognisable realistic narratives and recognisable Liverpool characters against a set that was multidimensional in its representation of the city’s space. This mingling was also temporal. Liverpool’s past and future potential could be read in the overshadowing of *Paradise Bound*’s depleted spools by the giant poster that promised a better tomorrow.

A similar temporal fluidity occurred in *Intemperance* where Murchison’s set design constituted a ‘thrown togetherness’ (ibid) of Liverpool then (the 19th century) and ‘now’ (2007). The design created a symbol of the possibility of a better future through Keogan’s white pathway of light leading up the stairs, out of the cellar. The hardships faced by the Victorian slum inhabitants overlapped thematically with contemporary disadvantaged communities, and Murchison’s configuration of the space communicated that this was a narrative with modern resonance. The distance between the real-life regeneration of Liverpool in 2007 and its 1854 fictionalisation was narrowed through the spatial dynamic. The slight thrust of the stage and fourth wall layout positioned the audience as directly looking into the family’s cellar. This formation acted to make *Intemperance* a window onto Liverpool’s poor and their exclusion from the city’s prosperity.

The design was simultaneously historic and current in order to frame the play's central premise, that the marginalisation of sections of the city from regeneration was nothing new. Massey (2005) writes that our concept of 'here' is always temporal; it is dependent on the moment of our encounter with a place and with that place's past, 'the accumulation of weavings and encounters [that] build up a history' (Massey 2005: 139). For the audience's conception of what they saw on stage to be understood as an accurate representation of "here" (Liverpool) their encounter with the world of *Intemperance* had to be both very much in the "here" and "now", rather than distanced by history. In addition to the spatial organisation of the stage, Murchison gave the set a sense of being "now" though his use of elements with "real" material properties. These included the character of Millie being able to scratch in the dirt (Nunnery 2007: 99), the soiling of the costumes by the dust in real time and a real fire (fig. 5) being lit on stage. The design's ability to physically affect the actors in the present maintained a sense of "here and now", despite the Liverpool being shown being so long-past. This narrowed the gap between the city's 19th century regeneration and that occurring in 2007.

3.5.1 Layered identities



Fig. 8. Production photograph for *Intemperance* (2006), Act1, Scene 1, Brynjar and Millie (Day 2006)

The scenography of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* showed how Liverpool had the potential to transform and reflected the ECOC itself as a period of change. In keeping with this, the productions also introduced characters who did not fit the widely accepted requirements of Scouse but who could be seen as offering a fresh perspective as to how Scouse identity is multifaceted, adaptable and performative. Anthony and Brynjar were presented as being markedly different from their contemporaries by their behaviour, taste and ambitions; namely to leave Liverpool behind them for Australia and New York, respectively. Here I focus on Brynjar and will discuss Anthony more specifically in 3.7.1.

Brynjar was differentiated from the rest of the *Intemperance*'s characters by his being Norwegian, and by his character's aspiration to lift his family out of poverty to a house on Lime Street⁷² with '...three rooms and curtains' (Nunnery 2007: 69). Brynjar's costuming was illustrative of his positive outlook, and his period work clothes in a smart, solid black stood out against the ubiquitous browns and greys. He also appeared more kempt than his counterparts, with styled hair and a decorative, if filthy, neckerchief which presented him as trying to do the best with what he had at his disposal. Fig. 8 shows Brynjar's first entrance in his dressed-up rags, arriving in the basement from the light, carrying a box of bananas (see Nunnery 2007:16-7). This image of the comparatively well-dressed Brynjar bearing his exotic gift was clearly symbolic. Exotic himself in his foreign otherness, he comes from the docks with hope and money represented by the new world fruit. By the end of both plays in which they feature, Brynjar and Anthony decide to stay in Liverpool and find a level of acceptance and peace with the city as home. This presents them as potential models of new Scouse identities that personify progress and transformation. Anthony and Brynjar's frustration with their place-bounded existence transmutes into an acceptance that they are part of those places, rather than superior to them. This does not represent a gloomy conclusion, one that suggests they will be depressed into the low culture they wanted to escape but an optimistic one. Anthony and Brynjar's newfound local patriotism require the audience to rethink whom and what Scouse cultural identities might embrace.

The scenographic constructions of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* showed that the experiences of the present-day Dingle residents (*Paradise Bound*) and the past slum-dwellers

⁷² As in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008) and *Hope Place* (2014), Lime Street was held up as an address of aspiration.

(Intemperance) did not fit with the ‘world-class’ image and prosperous history Liverpool was trying to promote ahead of the ECOC (Garcia, Melville, & Cox 2010:36). The staging of these Scouse identities and Liverpool-as-lived, differed from the images being perpetuated by the city council. This demonstrates that a calculated decision was made by the theatres as to who they included in their presentation of Liverpool cultural identity. However, it could be argued that the theatres were not necessarily best placed to address such exclusion. Theatre-going as a whole in Liverpool, and attendance at The Everyman and Playhouse in particular is still a predominately middle-class pursuit (see Barrett 2016: 149). This sheds doubt on whether those from marginalised areas of the city truly would have had seen themselves on stage, or if such presentation was intended to appeal to a demographic already well catered for by the ECOC’s programme.

3.6 Visualisation of working-class Liverpool

The visualisation of working-class, disadvantaged Liverpool communities on stage in these case studies is not unproblematic, especially considering that audiences at The Everyman and Playhouse were unlikely to be drawn from these groups themselves. Barrett (2016) interviewed audiences at the Royal Court Liverpool, which she characterised as largely consisting of local people from ‘lower socio-economic groups’ (Barrett 2016: 140). In these interviews, she found that the Royal Court theatre-goers considered The Everyman ‘posh... thespian’ (ibid, p.181). They described it as somewhere less affluent, working-class audiences would go to ‘learn something’ rather than to be entertained (ibid, p. 183). One participant, a working-class woman from Kirkby (North Liverpool) stated that watching a play at The Everyman was an alienating experience. She felt left out as the rest of the audience didn’t have Scouse accents, and all seemed to know each other from ‘....school or uni’ (ibid). Therefore, it is vital to take into account that it is likely *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* were primarily consumed by middle-class audiences, within a framework that was in itself seen to be exclusive. This is important in examining the plays’ presentation of characters from marginalised communities.

In this section I examine whether the costuming and framing of working class communities in these plays made use of, or contributed to Scouse stereotypes. The characterisation of Scouse personas as charming delinquents is a common trope of Liverpool drama inside the city as well as in national media (Chapter 2). Though such performances can be comedic

and self-aware, they are also limiting. Barrett refers to a stalwart of Royal Court plays being Scouse characters who overcome their circumstances through ‘wily subversion’ (Barrett 2016: 232). The characters often exist on the edge of the law, with resistance to authority being an essential component of their cheeky charisma. In *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*, the past and present families’ poverty was shown as directly leading to antisocial behaviour and criminality. Although these themes were pre-existing within the plays’ text, they were accentuated by design decisions. This potentially meant The Everyman and Playhouse could be seen as complicit in the perpetuation of Scouse identities as being representative of undesirable character traits.

In *Paradise Bound* all of the characters with the exception of Ann, were costumed in casual sportswear associated with an image of the working-class as lazy, addicted to alcohol and drugs, and criminal. Though such costuming decisions were likely made by Bailey in pursuit of realism, their ubiquitous use is problematic. Such representation risks having the audience members dismiss the characters as comical stereotypes, as opposed to finding empathy with them, and encourages them to blame the individual rather than their circumstances. The scenography also accentuated *Intemperance* and *Paradise Bound*’s depiction of excessive alcohol consumption as part of everyday life for Liverpool’s poor, past and present. Whether the characters’ regular drunkenness was a consequence of, or the instigation of their destitution (*Intemperance*) and unhappiness (*Paradise Bound*) was never explicitly addressed, but the presence of drinking paraphernalia in both designs cast it as significant to each families’ situation. In *Paradise Bound*, the men and women’s substance abuse and heavy drinking was illustrated by ashtrays and discarded cans whilst in *Intemperance*, the set was littered with unlabelled green and brown glass bottles, some suspended above the characters heads. The escape of both families, centuries apart, into drink is viewed by their better off contemporaries as a preference for coarse entertainment that is evidence of their unsophistication and vulgarity. Liverpool audiences are repeatedly faced with such theatrical presentations that align addiction and suffering with the onus of responsibility on the working-class individual. This contributes to, and serves to reinforce the city’s negative reputation as a hotbed of addiction and anti-social behaviour.



Fig. 9. Production photograph for *Intemperance* (2006), Act 1, Scene 1, L to R: Fergal, 'Ruairi, Brynjar and Millie (Day 2006)



Fig. 10. Production photograph for *Intemperance* (2006) Act 1, Scene 5, Ruairi and Niamh (Day 2006)



Fig. 11. Production photograph for *Intemperance* (2006) Act 2, Scene 3 Niamh, (Day 2006)

As well as being exploited for comic effect, the criminality of the Liverpool working-class has been commonly presented as somehow inevitable. Law breaking is frequently shown as part of Scouse culture, and as the only way disadvantaged communities have of obtaining material things. In *Intemperance*, the rewards of the family's illegal activities were signified by bright colour intrusions into the otherwise sepia colour palette of the lighting and set. This included the yellow of the stolen bananas (fig. 9) and Niamh's much commented upon red hair ribbon (fig. 10). This subtly conveyed that the only way the bright and the new could enter the lives of the underclass was by illegality or immoral action. The pattern took a darker turn when Niamh returns with brightly coloured bruises (fig. 11), received, like the ribbon, through prostitution. This motif will also appear in *Scrappers* (2013) (Chapter 6), where the bright pink costume worn by the character Jodie, in her first entrance into the sombre Fleetwood junkyard, heralds something new and not to be trusted.

Murchison and Bailey's design decisions made the plays' narrative themes of criminality and subjugation of Liverpool's poor and working-class communities visible. However, staging such themes, especially to a largely middle-class audience, is thwart with difficulties. The designers have to balance visualising the often harsh reality of life in these marginalised communities past and present whilst not reinforcing negative stereotypes. In Chapter 2 I discussed how images of Liverpool, Scouse identities and culture as aligned with indolence, anarchy and delinquency have been proliferated in national news media and popular culture. Presenting similar such images through scenography, especially within *Made in Liverpool* work – generated from inside the city, risks confirming the perceivable prejudices against Liverpool and Scouse culture. Taken in isolation, the designs of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* do not exacerbate the negative reputation of Liverpool and Scouse-ness. However, when considered in the context of Liverpool's place-branding ahead of the ECOC, the plays' presentation of crime, violence and substance abuse as part and parcel of life in marginalised Liverpool communities was problematic. Such presentation risked validating the LCC's apparent judgement that culture that centred around local experiences, or which was considered to be Scouse, was not appropriate to promote Liverpool ahead of the ECOC.

3.7 The family unit and Scouse kinship

Though the case studies visualised negative associations of Scouse-ness they also concentrated on family as a cornerstone of Liverpool life and key to Scouse identity. The family unit, close knit and defensive against those seen to threaten its dynamic or security, is a narrative device commonly employed within Made in Liverpool drama as symbolic of the kinship felt between Liverpool people. Family is positioned as the most important thing within these plays by the scenography as well as the narratives, with the repeated use of a table centre stage that bring members of the family together and/or the display of family photographs in prominent and reverential ways. These design techniques are in no way unique to Liverpool theatre. However, their frequent application warrants analysis of how such scenographic patterns have been used to promote the belief that Scouse identities have an affinity with one another that transcends their differences.



Fig. 12. Production photo for *Paradise Bound* (2006), Scene 1, Ann and Kathleen (Vaughn 2006)



Fig. 13. Production photo for *Intemperance* (2007), Act 1, Scene 2 “Fergal’ and Millie (Day 2007)

In *Paradise Bound*, *The Way Home*, *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place*, the families all come together at the table to eat real food. *Paradise Bound* starts and ends with a takeaway, described in exact detail in Larkin’s stage directions.⁷³ The laying out and consumption of real food on stage grounded the events as happening in real time, whilst simultaneously being theatricalised and performed within an interpretative stage set. The food was served casually (see fig.12), atop the depleted spool/table. The decision to present the food within the fast food containers, with little crockery or cutlery, suggested an informality and intimacy, and established the relationships of the characters. The play closes with Anthony

⁷³ Larkin’s description of the first takeaway is as follows:

‘Sweet and sour chicken is placed in the middle, with three boxes of fried rice, curry king prawns, four portions of sui mai, two portions of crispy spring rolls, two portions of sesame prawn toast, beef and green pepper and two bags of chips. The smell fills the kitchen immediately’ (Larkin 2006: 5)

Although Kathleen and Ann do refer to specific dishes in their discussion of their dinner, this amount of detail suggests that Larkin is trying to convey the large amount of food ordered by the family rather than place importance on accuracy in replicating their choices.

going once more to the ‘chippy’ (Larkin 2006: 111). Although this second meal does not physically occur, the reversal of Anthony being the one to provide the food is significant as it suggests a shift in the family dynamic. The staging of “breaking bread”, an idiom that stands for the sharing of any foodstuff as a coming together of people, is a common theatrical device and its repeated use within these Made in Liverpool plays reinforces an image of Scouse kinship.⁷⁴

Familial ties are further enforced in the set dressing of Made in Liverpool productions through the prominent display of family photographs. These photographs suggest that the families can trace their ancestry backwards and secures them as established within the city and its history. As second-generation Irish immigrants, *Intemperance*’s characters embodied an ancestral Scouse identity.⁷⁵ Their honouring of prior generations was visualised by the reverential presentation of Millie’s father Fergal. Whilst the rest of the family slept directly on the floor, Murchison employed a single bed⁷⁶ for the patriarch (fig.13) consisting of a wooden pallet elevated by being placed on top of rocks. The bed was crude yet its presence and dominant position in the family’s living space endowed it with a religious quality. The bed of stones surrounded by candles appeared similar to an altar or shrine. This design of Fergal’s sleeping place, later his deathbed, showed the veneration paid to and thus significance of the family within the characters’ value system. Their respect for preceding generations was represented by Fergal on his altar-like bed, and carried the implication that the family too deserved the audience’s recognition and respect as Scouse ancestors

3.7.1 “Fellas” and “Mams” in *Paradise Bound*

The respect paid by the rest of the family to Fergal in *Intemperance* was also indicative of his standing as the family patriarch. In 2.6.1, I established how theatricalised Scouse identities frequently revert to gendered stereotypes. I referred to the most common of these as “Fella”, “Scouse-Bird” and “Mam” characters. *Paradise Bound* includes clear “Fella” and

⁷⁴ I will examine this as a trope that also appears particularly in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place* in Chapter 4.

⁷⁵ More detail on how the roots of Scouse identity are inextricably entwined with Irish immigration to the city can be found in Belchem, J (2007) *Irish catholic and Scouse*, pp.322 – 323 and (2008) *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History*. pp. 311- 314.

⁷⁶ Fergal remains in this bed throughout the whole play up to his murder, part mercy killing, part act of desperation, by his own grandson Ruairi (Nunnery 2007: 96).

“Mam” type characters that I here examine as illustrative of the ways in which these stereotypes have typically been visualised. In *Intemperance*, Millie and Ruairi embody traits associated with “Fella” and “Mam” stereotypes, but these were not shown explicitly through the scenography. Instead these traits were indicated by the direction, plot and the actors’ physicality. This included pregnant “Mam” Millie being restricted to the home and engaging in domestic, care-giving work whilst swaggering, macho “Fella” Ruairi took part in street fights outside of the home. In both productions, the relationships between “Fella” and “Mam” type characters were shown as integral to the family bond, established as essential to Scouse-ness

The two female characters of *Paradise Bound* (Ann and Kathleen) were presented as Scouse matriarchs: “Mams”. They were shown as acting as caregivers to the two young men, whilst struggling to maintain a degree of independence through their nights out to bars and clubs.⁷⁷ Bailey reflected these different aspects of the character’s identities through their costumes. It is discernible from the available production photographs that there was a distinct difference in how the women were presented as dressing at (Ann’s’) home and for their going-out to drink, dance and meet men. Fig. 14 shows Kathleen and Ann costumed, ready for a night out, in complementary pink outfits. Bailey’s use of pink was a deliberate statement, being a colour commonly associated with the “Scouse-Bird” stereotype – typically levelled at young Liverpool women.⁷⁸ Ann and Kathleen’s’ pink outfits implied that the women were trying to appear younger than they were. This emphasised how these nights out were one of the few ways the women had of feeling young and of having fun. Dressing up to go out on the town (presumably the city centre) represented an escape from their daily lives in Dingle and the drudgery of their “Mam” roles.

⁷⁷ Despite only Danny being Ann’s’ son, Kathleen also fulfilled a “Mam” type role in looking after both him and ‘Anthony.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 3, Part 2, and Chapter 6 for examples of pink costumes used to indicate “Scouse-Bird” type characters.



Fig. 14. Production photo for *Paradise Bound* (2006), Scene 3, Kathleen and Ann (Vaughn 2006)

The young male characters of *Paradise Bound*, Anthony and Danny, were presented in ways that correspond to the “Fella” stereotype that I outlined in Chapter 2. This was coded through their work (Danny’s manual job, see fig.15) and shared passion for football, (see fig. 16 – close up of Anthony’s England football shirt), drinking and marijuana. In addition, Larkin’s narrative saw Danny struggle with his self-imposed obligation to act as the male head of the household, his father being absent and his brother having been sent to prison. His adoption of this role sees him repeatedly admonish his mother for what he deems inappropriate behaviour such as her going out drinking and meeting younger men (Larkin 2006: 95). In fig.17 Danny is topless in the kitchen with Kathleen who looks bedraggled, costumed in an insipid grey dressing gown. The chronology of the photos indicates fig.17 shows scene 4 (Larkin 2006: 28) where Danny engages in subtly misogynistic behaviour, including eating toast from Kathleen’s plate and asking her to iron his shirt. Although Danny is not threatening or violent towards his mother or her friend, his presence was asserted through his intimidating, half nakedness, a recognisable stalwart of Scouse machismo.

Chapter 3, Part 1: Showing off the City

Bailey costumed Anthony in a similar manner to Danny. Both characters wore tops in blues and black, tracksuit bottoms and trainers without obvious branding. This is of interest as Anthony does not fit the accepted model of Scouse “Fella” I established in Chapter 2 due to his sexual orientation. Despite Liverpool having a long-established gay community and quarter in the city, the baseline for Scouse identity has been largely considered as heterosexual along with white and working class. Larkin has Anthony aware of his outsider status and wary as to the prejudice he feels will be inevitable from Danny when his friend learns of his sexuality. It is presented as a surprising that Danny seems un-bothered and admits that he has known that his friend was gay all along (Larkin 2006: 74). That this was framed as a twist in the narrative is revealing as to the assumptions the audience were expected to have – that a Scouse “Fella” would be presumed to be homophobic. Therefore, one reading of the young men’s comparable costuming was that they were more alike than they were different, and both were acceptable faces of modern Liverpool masculinity.



Fig. 15. Production photo for *Paradise Bound* (2006), [Cropped Detail] Danny (Vaughn 2006)



Fig. 16. Production photo for *Paradise Bound* (2006), [Cropped Detail] Anthony (Vaughn 2006)



Fig. 17. Production photo for *Paradise Bound* (2006), Scene 4, Kathleen and Danny (Vaughn 2006)

Yet, Bailey may also have been using the similarities in the costumes to make a comment on Anthony's feeling the need to conform and hide his sexuality. In scene 9 Anthony and Danny discuss the possibility of Anthony not moving to Australia, instead trying to build a life and find a relationship as an out gay man in Dingle. The script is written in Scouse vernacular.

Anthony: Masculine. That's the name of the game' ere isn't? Footy... everythin's footy. Anfield, Goodison, every lad's got a kit and the one's who 'aven't are a bit girly...Dads an' lads... know whatta mean?

Danny: Yer like footy yerself.

Anthony: It's not about that, I was sayin' that as an example...it's that thing where everythin's the same! An' if yer not the same then yer different...an' if yer different then yer may as well just curl up an' die...The trackies, the trainers, the footy kit, are yer a red, are yer a blue... (Larkin 2006: 77)

Here, Anthony describes it as a necessity that 'every lad' (ibid) show that they like football through their attire in order to be accepted. In this he refers specifically to garments he has been wearing throughout the play 'The trackies, the trainers, the footy kit' as being uniform items that endow their wearer with Scouse masculinity, preventing them from being considered 'girly' (ibid). The possibility that Anthony is aiming to conform by

wearing these ubiquitous items is raised earlier in the play when he defends his admiration for a man's pink Mohican by saying: 'Who's to say I don't wanna look different?' (Larkin 2006: 36). Thus, a secondary reading of Anthony's 'Fella' costuming is that it shows an identity he feels forced to adopt. It is possible that Bailey costumed Anthony in clothing the character would choose to pass as an archetypal heterosexual, working-class Scouse masculine 'Fella', mimicking the personae embodied by Danny.

Though such 'Fella' and 'Mam' costuming appears to have drawn on Scouse stereotypes commonly encountered in the national media, Larkin's characters were more subtle depictions. Ann and Kathleen's (the 'Mams') and Danny's (the 'Fella') acceptance of Anthony on his coming out, contradicted the intolerance that audiences may have expected from the way the characters were dressed. The characters' habitual interactions, easy tolerance and familiarity made them sympathetic despite their appearance fitting the tracksuited hooligan and brassy matriarch labels.

3.8 Press Reception of *Intemperance* and *Paradise Bound*

Despite its importance in visualising the tensions emerging between Liverpool experience and the ECOC, there was little mention of *Intemperance* and *Paradise Bound*'s scenography in subsequent reviews and features.⁷⁹ For *Paradise Bound*, the discussion there was of the design mostly detached it from its ECOC context and socio-cultural significance. This is symptomatic of the persistent lack of recognition given to scenography's ability to reinforce or carry political signification independently. *Intemperance*'s coverage was more explicit in its recognition of the ECOC link. There emerges, however, a split between recognition in the local press that the plays were exploring the ECOC award, which they saw as problematic, and national papers attributing the problems to Liverpool as an inappropriate host.

Local coverage of *Paradise Bound* appears to have been split between supporting the production's challenging as to how the ECOC was being handled, whilst not wanting to speak ill of the city. Joe Riley's review for *The Liverpool Daily Post* (2006) recognised how the

⁷⁹Unless otherwise stated in the bibliography, the reviews for *Intemperance* are taken from the cuttings preserved in The Everyman archive: Press Review Pack *Intemperance* 2007, EVT reference, EVT/PR/000469. No reviews or press cuttings relating to *Paradise Bound* were archived.

set showed Dingle's relegation from the ECOC by implying that any rejuvenations were 'taking place somewhere off-stage' (Riley 2006). However, Riley was quick to separate Dingle from wider Liverpool through his focus on Anthony's coming out story line. His separation of the area from the rest of the city reflects the tendency of national reviewers to view drama that spotlights regional stories as less relevant than that based in London or even in foreign countries. Writing in *The Guardian*, Alfred Hickling (2006) expressed concern that *Paradise Bound* would be utterly alien to those not from Liverpool who would wish 'they had brought a phrase book' in order to understand what was happening (Hickling 2006). Riley considered the acceptance of Anthony's sexual orientation by his friends as surprising with the Dingle setting reducing a 'universal story' (a coming out narrative) to 'a parochial canvas' (Riley *ibid*). His labelling of Dingle as 'parochial' insinuated that the area is narrow-minded and divides the city. He inferred that Dingle lacked the cultural sophistication of central Liverpool and that homophobia is characteristic of the working-class Scouse identities that occupy such areas. As well as demonstrating how areas such as Dingle can be marginalised from within the city, Riley's comments are revealing in his assumptions as to Scouse masculinity, particularly as Riley has been the longstanding arts correspondent at both the *Liverpool Echo* and *The Liverpool Daily Post* and so his comments are likely to have been deemed representative of local opinion.

Riley proposed that the characters' acceptance of Anthony is due to his not being presented as a 'pantomime poof' (Riley *ibid*). Instead of being pantomimic Anthony enjoys customary masculine pursuits, 'football, partying, and the odd trip into town' (Riley *ibid*). Though Riley did not write directly about the costumes, it is reasonable to consider his reading of the design as contributing to his assessment with Anthony's love of football demonstrated by his England team shirt. Anthony was shown as not visually deviating from the accepted image of Scouse masculinity by his being dressed similarly to "Fella" Danny. It is this ordinariness that Riley saw as integral to why Anthony does not face the presumed prejudice. In contrast, Hickling (2006) considered the play an example of how far 'gay drama' had come from Jonathan Harvey's *Beautiful Thing* (1993) in that Anthony's coming out was met with 'almost supine indifference' (Hickling *ibid*). Though *A Beautiful Thing* is set in London, Harvey is a Liverpool playwright making the comparison relevant to the way local attitudes have shifted.

A rare national review of *Paradise Bound* that made mention of the play's scenography was Carole Baldock's for *The Stage* (2006b). Baldock considered Bailey's design to be at odds with the play's style and in friction with her expectations for a 'kitchen sink' drama (Baldock 2006b). She described Bailey's integration of the multiple places as messy; '...like an explosion in a white goods factory, meant to double as a playing field, as well as a cramped kitchen' (ibid). Her negative critique of the design appears to have been less to do with her judgement as to its functionality or aesthetic, and more concerned with her preconceptions as to what scenography is appropriate for a realist narrative. Her comments support my observations that largely, the national press seems more comfortable with a singular image of Liverpool that fits with what they already know, than scenography that is discursive or challenging.

Baldock and Riley's reviews implied that *Paradise Bound's* design and setting diminished its relevance, however criticism of *Intemperance* praised its Liverpool specificity and the historical setting as having highlighted its ECOC themes. Riley was explicit in his review for the *Liverpool Echo* (2007b) as to *Intemperance's* political stance on the ECOC. He observed that the inequality depicted in the production was a metaphor for contemporary disparity in the city. He found the play's cellar setting, below the developing city, reminiscent of Liverpool in 2006 which was '...spending millions on capital of culture while places like the Boot estate⁸⁰ still look as if the war ended yesterday' (Riley 2007b). Riley's review invited a comparison between the image of the neglected estate in the shadow of the ECOC expenditure and of the slum as visualised in *Intemperance*, subverting the false promise of regeneration.

In her review for *The Independent* (2007), Lynn Walker similarly compared building projects name checked in *Intemperance* to contemporary regeneration developments. She recognised that the Nunnery's characters faced similar prejudice as the city's contemporary disadvantaged. Liverpool's marginalised communities, past and present had been encouraged to '...know their place.' (Walker 2007) and to accept that it was '...never their time' (ibid) to be celebrated. Though Walker did not directly discuss the scenography, she drew a direct comparison between the ostracised, theatricalised, historic poor of *Intemperance*

⁸⁰ The 'Boot estate' is the colloquial name given to 1980s Norris Green estate in Liverpool. The area was cleared for demolition and regeneration in 2000 but delays in funding saw this pushed back to 2013.

and their modern-day counterparts who felt side-lined from the ECOC's benefits. The production was understood to show Liverpool's dilemma in wanting to celebrate winning the ECOC title, but also to critique how the LCC were excluding underprivileged communities and areas from the regeneration and festivities brought about by the award. This was expressed by Hickling in his review for *The Guardian* (2007) where he praised how *Intemperance* represented local people's anger as 'provoked by civic triumphalism' (Hickling 2007) whilst not undermining the city's 'communal optimism and pride' (ibid). Again, Hickling did not specifically cite the scenography but his description of the play as an 'austere lamplit [sic] outline of a Victorian morality painting' shows how the visual was integral to his understanding of the play as a cautionary tale.

Walker and Hickling (2007) recognised *Intemperance* as an advisory metaphor of how contemporary regeneration in Liverpool may not benefit everyone in the city. Their reviews are notable exceptions to a tendency I observed in national publications, where critics blamed the play's characters for their own exclusion and dispossession. Murchison's historic cellar set design was interpreted in these reviews as representative of the whole city in 2006, presented as a depressed and run-down place. The scenography was not seen as symbolic but rather as a 'necessary dark' (Chris High in *The Stage* 2007) backdrop to the character's immoral actions. In *The Times* (2007), John Peter drew a parallel between what he perceived as the optimism of the slum dwellers in their 'grey basement set filled with grimy rags' (Peter 2007) and Liverpool's belief that the city could host the ECOC. Peter extended the characters' culpability for their fate to Liverpool as being ill equipped to deliver the ECOC. As I discussed in 3.1, there already was widespread national scepticism as to whether the city would be able to achieve a successful event.

In these readings, the scenography reinforced some reviewers' interpretation that *Intemperance*'s depiction of local uncertainty regarding the ECOC, and its critical view of past regeneration in the city, was symptomatic of Liverpool's victim complex. The city's issues and the tribulations of its inhabitants were understood as being Liverpool's own fault. In his review for *The Telegraph* (2007), Dominic Cavendish deemed that it would take an outsider like Brynjar to engender any 'prospect of a better life' and escape from the 'gloomy basement' (Cavendish 2007) for the Liverpool family. Quentin Lett's review in *The Daily Mail* (2007) stated that *Intemperance* asked '...old fashioned questions about the responsibility of the feckless poor to look after themselves' (Letts 2007). Lett's moralistic

comments demonstrate his interpretation of the characters' drunkenness, poverty and quickness to violence as accurate representations of Liverpool's deprived communities – past and present. This was despite the narrative style and scenography framing the play as a Victorian melodrama. The political agency of *Intemperance* was thus largely ignored by the national press in favour of focussing on the 'feckless' (ibid) characters and undesirable cellar setting. These were critiqued in ways that revealed such a narrative and visuals were expected nationally from a play set in Liverpool and featuring Scouse identities.

The designs of *Intemperance* and *Paradise Bound* created a tension between what was said and what was seen. Reviewers writing about the productions typically found this to be confusing and had difficulty seeing beyond the relatively straightforward, social issue narratives of the plays. Though on one level *Intemperance* and *Paradise Bound* were telling clear-cut stories about characters from historic and present-day marginalised, disadvantaged Liverpool communities, the scenography in each production suggested something more nuanced. In *Paradise Bound* the actors spoke in Scouse voices, in a natural manner on an unrealistic set. This pushed against what seems to have been considered, as observed by Baldock (2006b), customary for a north-west, realist drama. *Intemperance's* setting framed its contemporary commentary on the ECOC as a Victorian melodrama. This gave the issues visualised in the play weight. Concerns as to the city's social and economic disparity in 2006 were legitimised by considering them through the lens of the city's history.

3.9 Summary of Chapter 3, Part 1

The scenography of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* played a major role in reinforcing their commentary on how the ECOC was impacting the lives of local people. The designers drew attention to the lived experience of the city in marginalised areas, in opposition to the images of Liverpool that were being heavily marketed ahead of 2008 –the ECOC event year. In so doing, the visual dimension of the plays provided their own interpretation of how the social geography of Liverpool had been affected, related to but beyond that posed by the plays' narratives. The productions were purposed to pull focus away from the polished presentation of Liverpool, its communities and its culture, that was being promoted by the LCC, to that which was real and present, if in *Intemperance*, embodied in a parabolic past.

Paradise Bound visualised divided Liverpool as discussed by Boland (2010), where disadvantaged areas and people were hidden out of sight to keep the focus on officially sanctioned culture. The design emphasised how the ECOC preparations were experienced by the Dingle community who were excluded from the award's benefits. By aligning a critical time in the city's history with the ECOC, *Intemperance* gave contemporary issues precedence and potency. Murchison's design underscored the whole production as metaphor rather than period documentary including visual prompts to modern references such as the city's reputation for binge drinking. The plays' layered scenography allowed for their settings to encompass more than one experience of place, for instance, the contrast between either side of the fence in *Paradise Bound*. This created an interconnectedness that transcended time, specifically in relation of *Intemperance*'s 19th century setting relating to 2007, and more generally in the past and immediate future being visually present in each plays' staging.

In choosing to programme such discursive Made in Liverpool plays within the seasons leading up to 2008, Liverpool's year as the ECOC, The Everyman and Playhouse introduced questions about the award's effects on the perception and performance of local identities. *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* depicted some of Liverpool's most marginalised communities, past and present, in designs that visualised their division and exclusion from the city's regeneration. Alongside other productions in this season (Chapter 5), the staging of areas of Liverpool that remained in need, cast doubt on the official narrative that the ECOC award would benefit the entire city. Conversely, though *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* spotlighted many negative aspects of local experience, they also showed a multifaceted view of Scouse, that could be seen as a positive expansion of what the culture and identity could be seen to encompass. In Part 2 of this chapter, "Showing Off the City", I will question how moving from these layered productions to the celebratory musicals that followed, may have been reflective of the theatres wanting to be seen as unequivocally supportive of Liverpool as the ECOC. This would have been motivated by a need to ensure that their output was recognised within the city's cultural offerings and to secure future funding.

Chapter 3: Part 2
Showing Off the City: A Move to Celebration

The stars are calling out our name, it's Liverpool's time again. At last the world is waking, shout the news across the sky...

Phil Willmott 2008

3. 10 Showing off the city: a move to celebration

The arrival of Liverpool's 2008 ECOC year saw The Everyman and Playhouse's programme shift in tone from productions that were complex and political in their depiction of local stories, to those that appeared primarily concerned with painting the city in a good light. In Part 2 of this chapter, entitled "Showing off the city" I examine two of these productions: the musicals *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008) and *Eric's* (2008). My analysis of these productions is again based on archival ephemera. Unlike the case studies of Chapter 3, Part 1, I do not cover the promotional and marketing material, as what has been preserved is limited and, post-scrutiny, proved of little value to this study. In *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History* (2013) Ros Merkin describes *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* as embodying the theatres' 'fighting spirit' (Merkin 2013: 100). This 'spirit' built on the Made in Liverpool productions that preceded 2008 to create a '...complex and critical conversation' with 'audiences about what it is to be living in this city at this time, to belong to this group, or this tribe' (ibid). Though both productions were relatively well received locally, this 'critical conversation' was problematised by the limited, often stereotypical identities depicted and the romanticising of the city's past.

The designs of the 2008 musicals could be seen as having overlaps with the interconnectedness that I observed in the scenography of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*. Christopher Woods (*Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*) and Soutra Gilmour's (*Eric's*) designs used one organisation of space to encompass multiple epochs and places. However, the musicals' designs differed in that they included complex scenographic transitions between these times and places including, respectively, a revolve and flying from the rig. Therefore, despite being extensively contained within one location, both productions visualised the moment of change from one time or place creating a distinction between them. Unlike the discursive perspective of the preceding case studies, the designers here were engaged with creating a resurrection of the iconic establishments that the musicals were celebrating. Thus, instead of intersecting one place or time with another in order to make a political

statement, *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* support the accusation that I identified in Chapter 3, Part 1, and that was prevalent during the ECOC, that Liverpool's best days were behind it. In my analysis of these "showing off the city" works, I will show how Woods and Gilmour's visualisations of Liverpool history sustained a nostalgic image of the city. This nostalgia was utilised by cultural providers and tourist attractions to promote the city during its ECOC period but risked feeding into a wider narrative that has seen Liverpool painted as sentimental and overly focussed on past glories.

3.11 Made in Liverpool musicals

Once upon a Time at the Adelphi and *Eric's* represent the only musicals (the annual 'Rock'n'Roll' pantomimes notwithstanding)⁸¹ produced under the theatres' Made in Liverpool label until 2017. Once a key part of the theatres' programming, there had not been an in-house produced musical since *Blues in the Night* (1994). The decision to produce two during the ECOC, one for each of The Everyman and Playhouse stages, drew on the theatres' rich history of musical productions (see Merkin 2004, 2011). In this section I briefly consider how by staging musicals as central to their 2008 seasons, the theatres appear to have been making a purposeful move to be seen as locally patriotic. This will provide a background to my descriptive analysis of each musical's particular design, before I move to on to the conclusions I draw from these observations.

In *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (2006), Raymond Knapp considers how the American musical has been an important cultural tool in nation building. Though his study is of American practice, his observations have many overlaps with how the 2008 musicals constructed and staged a sense of Scouse-ness. Knapp states that American musicals aim to connect with their audiences by presenting a set of ideals that they will recognise as being canonically American. He asserts that this relies on the intended audiences being '....acutely aware of anything that challenges their notions of what or who America is or stands for, or of its place in the world' (Knapp 2006: 111). This could be equally applied to people in Liverpool watching a musical about Liverpool. The recognition of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* as canonically Scouse as it were, was

⁸¹ The Rock 'n' Roll panto is the name given to The Everyman's annual jukebox pantomime.

dependent on how much what Liverpool audiences saw matched their concept of the city. This can be understood as both immaterial concepts (Scouse humour and culture) and in the material qualities of the city and its landmarks as expressed in the scenography. In her PhD thesis, Louise Platt (2011) refers to some cultural events that occurred during the ECOC acting as a ‘...hall of mirrors in their depiction of Liverpool identity (Platt 2011: 72). Recognisable cultural rituals were absorbed into performances, the same images and stories continually repeated. In their staging of well-known Liverpool landmarks, *Eric’s* and *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* became part of this ‘hall of mirrors’ (ibid). The musicals reflected narratives and images of Liverpool back to the local audience, including expressions of Scouse identity that were, in this instance, amplified and distorted in the process.

Knapp (2005) writes that the presenting a narrative as a musical, as opposed to drama, heightens scenes that might have otherwise been naturalistic through exaggeration. He describes this as ‘...adding a dimension of artificiality’ (Knapp 2005: 12). This artificiality shifts the audience’s emotions into a higher gear (Knapp 2005: 13). A similar effect is achieved through the scenography, especially as musicals tend towards less realistic design in favour of bright lights and images. This style of scenography creates a distance between the production and the audience, the set and costumes intended to impress and be entertaining rather than relatable to the lives of those watching. In the case of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric’s*, the designs aimed to be spectacular rather than realistic whilst presenting an idealised version of the city’s past. Therefore, visually, the musicals were aiming to be recognisable (canonically Scouse) whilst creating a state of heightened emotion designed to generate a nostalgia for the city’s past. Such designs may elicit feelings of pride or even wistfulness for a Liverpool deemed bygone, or irretrievably lost. They may, however, also serve to limit Liverpool identity in framing it as constantly backwards looking.

By presenting images and experiences of the city as built on a notion of a lost past, the scenography of the musicals contributed to an overly romanticised, nostalgic view of Liverpool and Scouse-ness. In Svetlana Boym’s *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), she characterises such sentimentalist, potentially revisionist, remembrance as restorative. Boym’s work is a meditation on the history and sensation of nostalgia, which can be used to consider the glorification of the past that took place in the 2008 musicals. When a group

that occupied a shared identity (such as Scouse) believe that their experience of that identity has deviated from a past that was somehow better and less atomised, this creates ‘....a sense of loss of community and cohesion’ (Boym 2001: 42). This results in ‘restorative nostalgia’, to use Boym’s phrase, being created in order to counteract such feelings and to ‘...rebuild the lost home’ (ibid, p.41). I will argue that the scenographic composition of both these musicals manufactured this sense of ‘lost home’, employing very different strategies to achieve the same ends.

3.12 Design of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008)

Once upon a Time at the Adelphi premiered on the 28 June 2008, written and directed by Phil Willmott⁸² and designed by Woods. It is apparent on examining the archived production photographs⁸³ and Willmott’s 2008 script that the musical was a large-scale production intended to be a spectacle. There is no available recording of the musical although trailers and clips are available on YouTube (everymanplayhouse 2008) (Scoused Will 2009). Willmott’s inspiration was The Britannia Adelphi Hotel (est. 1914),⁸⁴ commonly referred to as The Adelphi, on Ranelagh Place in central Liverpool. The hotel was once a major destination for wealthy travellers sailing to and from Liverpool Docks and later for artists appearing at the Empire theatre, including Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra. The hotel’s reputation within Liverpool is as a once-glamorous institution due to its famous guests and baroque style interior but in more recent times it has been criticised for falling standards. It is no longer considered premium lodging for Liverpool visitors and tourists.⁸⁵

⁸² Willmott had previously directed *Around The World In Eighty Days* (2002) at the Playhouse and *Master Harold And The Boys* (2003) at The Everyman.

⁸³ Production Photographs *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, [Compact Disc], Photographer: Robert Day, 2008, EVT Reference, Playhouse Box (2012). 2012 refers to the year that the box was deposited, it has since been transferred to the Liverpool Central Library whereas, of 2018, its contents remain uncatalogued.

⁸⁴ A hotel has stood on the site occupied by The Adelphi since 1826. The Adelphi that stands on the site today was built in 1914, designed by renowned, Liverpool-born architect Frank Atkinson.

⁸⁵ The Adelphi’s fall from grace was documented in the 1997 BBC Television fly on the wall documentary series *Hotel*. The series ran for 8 episodes and garnered 11 million viewers at its peak. The Adelphi continues to have its failings highlighted in the local press including Criddle (2016).

The musical's narrative follows two sets of star-crossed lovers who work at the hotel at different periods in time; Alice and Thompson in the 1930s and Neil and Jo in 2008. The roles were doubled, with Young Alice and Jo played by Julie Atherton and Neil and Thompson by Simon Bailey. Older Alice (Natasha Seale) served as the conduit between the contemporary scenes and flashbacks. The play had a large supporting ensemble, including students from Liverpool Institute of the Performing Arts (LIPA), who played guests and staff. Photographs suggest that Woods' set exploited the central playing area of the Playhouse's stage, with most action (especially large dance numbers) presented there. Woods' set framed the Adelphi space within the proscenium arch of the Playhouse, making it clear to audiences likely familiar with such presentation (especially at the Playhouse) that what they were watching was a traditional stage musical. The following production photos (Day 2008), considered in conjunction with Willmott's published script, suggest Woods' design also reflected this format. Woods took references from classic Hollywood musicals, setting the scene for a production that was aiming to be an entertaining celebration rather than provocative.

Woods predominantly used one set for all locations in the hotel, past and present. The full extent of the set is visible in fig. 18, which appears to have been taken from the theatre's front stalls. The central structure with a staircase adjoining it (stage left) served as the Adelphi Hotel's main entrance. This entrance had a platform above it (fig. 19) which was used to represent the hotel's roof. Fig. 19 shows a suspended 'Britannia Adelphi Hotel' sign above this platform which later appears again reversed (see fig. 36) allowing the audience to be clear as to whether they were viewing the hotel from the "inside" or "outside" at any moment.⁸⁶ Beyond the structure was a cyclorama with a silhouette of Liverpool's skyline, lit to create the effect of the sky at different times of day. The space framing the set was left largely unlit, allowing the structure to loom out of the surrounding darkness.

⁸⁶ It is unclear from the production photos whether the whole sign rotated or if (which seems more practical considering the rigging implications) there were two signs.



Fig. 18. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 5 Babs (Helen Carter) (centre) and ensemble, entrance to The Adelphi Hotel, 1930s, (Day 2008)



Fig. 19. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 2, Young Alice (Julie Atherton), the roof of The Adelphi, present day (Day 2008)



Fig. 20. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 7, L to R Babs, Fritz (Tom Oakley), Thompson (Simon Bailey), Young Alice and Roy Rogers (Nick Smithers), The stairs leading up the hotel “roof” (revolved), 1930s (Day 2008)



Fig. 21. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 2, Scene 1, Ensemble, Thompson and Young Alice (centre), The accounts department, 1930s (Day 2008)

The set's central structure, bordered by a stationary colonnade, stage right, rotated in what Chris High, in his review for *WhatsOnStage* (2008), described as a '...revolving maze of intricacy' (High 2008). When fully turned (see fig. 20), the staircase became the central focus of the set, creating different levels of the hotel. This created a sense of the hotel's vastness and its complex labyrinth of corridors within the limitations of the Playhouse stage. The use of the revolve was also a reference to the hotel's locally-famed revolving doors. The doors, at the front of the hotel, were present in the 1930s and are still there, if not in their exact original form, today. The 1930s frontage was also recalled in the art deco style framework that surrounded the entrance and platform above, simulating the effect of the hotel's lead frame windows. This pattern was echoed in the balustrade of the staircase, which, in the lighting state pictured in fig. 20, appears almost golden. Such visual allusions to the hotel's past as a grand and expensive destination relied on local knowledge, such as the existence of these revolving doors. The scenography utilised this local knowledge, creating a theatrical commemoration of the Liverpool landmark as well as suggesting a Liverpool way of life understood to be in the past.

The decorative ornamentation, with chandeliers and red carpet (fig. 18), evoked the hotel that had once been palatial. This was echoed in the set's paint effect of imitation Portland stone. This pale grey limestone, quarried from the Isle of Portland (Dorset) is associated with wealth and grandeur and is used within the architecture of Buckingham Palace and the Bank of England, but has particular resonance in Liverpool. This is because two of the city's 'Three Graces' (the Cunard and the Port of Liverpool Buildings), famed historic symbols of the city's commercial prestige, are built of Portland stone. The grey colour of the Portland stone in conjunction with the black floor provided a neutral background to Ben Cracknell's lighting design. The mainly greyscale shades of the stage design were offset by Cracknell's colourful lighting (see fig. 18). Cracknell employed haze (fig. 19) and defined beams (fig. 21) adding a layer of unreality to the scenography in a manner that would be expected from a stage musical. His dramatic lighting brought a vivacity to Woods' set design that was quickly removed for the 2008 set scenes (fig. 34). These scenes were lit in flatter, cold washes and looked purposefully drab and lacklustre in comparison. This contributed to the musical's tendency towards romanticising the city's history with the potential risk of demonising the present. I will further discuss this dichotomy where the hotel's past was shown as vastly superior to the present in 3.15.

This romanticising of the past extended to Woods' costumes, in particular those of the 1930s characters compared to the modern day. While one might expect the guests of that period to have been relatively lavishly attired considering their likely wealth and social standing, this glamourisation extended to the costuming of the hotel staff. Fig. 18 shows the ensemble dressed in reproduction, cartoonish versions of domestic service uniforms with Babs (Helen Carter) in a flapper style head band. In this scene (Act 1, Scene 5), chambermaid Bab's sings 'stylized [sic] "Diamonds-Are-A-Girl's-Best-Friend" fantasy' (Willmott 2012: 26) number *A Wedding and a Yacht* (Willmott 2008) with the rich male hotel guests. Period accuracy appears to have been secondary to keeping within the format of a classic Hollywood stage or screen musical. Characters with individual plot lines were given easily readable identities through costume pieces such as celebrity cowboy Roy Rogers (Nick Smithers), indicated by his waistcoat and cowboy hat in fig. 20. and Brad Finkle (also Nick Smithers) (centre, fig. 22) in the uniform of an American GI. The costumes were also a key indicator of when the narrative had shifted to a new location or period (e.g. modern day or taking place in a flashback). Though the set was able to revolve, the majority of scene changes seem to have been done with minor additions of furniture or flown in pieces. Photographs indicate that comparatively little dressing was added to signify different times or locations. That which was brought on, such as the wheeled tables for Act 2, Scene 1, set in the accounts' department (see fig. 21) were easily portable. This allowed pieces to be moved swiftly on and off the stage, avoiding any loss of narrative and musical flow.



Fig. 22. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 2, Scene 7, Ensemble, Brad (Nick Smithers), (centre), The Adelphi Ballroom, 1930s (Day 2008)



Fig. 23. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 4, Fritz (Tom Oakley), The Adelphi kitchens, 1930s (Day 2008)

An exception to these quick set changes is shown in fig. 23 where a large flat appears to have been flown in to transform the space for the scene set in the hotel's kitchen (Act 1 Scene 4). This "wall" signified a single place – the hotel kitchen, whilst the majority of the large set pieces, which remained present throughout the musical, were flexible as to where they represented. It also served to separate the numbers⁸⁷ that took place in the kitchen, populated by the hotel's staff, from scenes that also featured hotel guests. Fig. 23 shows the doors and wall as dirtied down, covered over with pipework and inset with two turbines that seem too large to be realistic. This represented the engine room of the hotel, concealing the labour that allowed for the glamour portrayed in the rest of the building. Centre in fig. 23 is the character of German kitchen porter Fritz (Tom Oakley). Fritz was a thinly veiled reference to the Liverpool rumour that Hitler once worked in the kitchens of The Adelphi.⁸⁸ This character appeared alongside a theatricalised portrayal of Hollywood cowboy Roy Rogers (Nick Smithers) and his horse Trigger – portrayed by a large stylised puppet (see fig. 20). The real Roy Rogers and his horse did indeed stay at The Adelphi, but in 1954, long after the period (1930s) depicted in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*.⁸⁹ The characters of Roy Rogers and Fritz played on local mythology by visualising the city's fictional legends and reworking actual historic happenings. In 3.17, I compare this playing with local myths to designer Gilmour's costuming of performers as recognisable Liverpool celebrities in *Eric's*.

⁸⁷ *Musical Comedy Showtune and Rats* (Willmott 2008)

⁸⁸ The story that Hitler used to live in Liverpool arose from memoirs of his sister-in-law Bridget Hitler: *Memoirs of Bridget Hitler* (1979), who claims he stayed for a while in Liverpool in 1912. However, his having worked at the Adelphi is unlikely to be true.

⁸⁹ Roy Rogers stayed at The Adelphi in 1954 with his horse Trigger, that he walked up the entrance steps to huge press attention (Tansley 2014).



Fig. 24. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 3, Ensemble, Dingle, 1930s (Day 2008)

A second major departure from the hotel's main interior takes place in Act 1, Scene 3 (Willmott 2012: 13) where Thompson goes back to Dingle (the same area of Liverpool as featured in *Paradise Bound*) to visit his family. Woods marked this location change by creating a sense of Dingle on top of the hotel through the addition of washing lines flown in to hang above the downstage area. Fig. 24 shows that these lines were hung with what at first appears to be laundry but on closer inspections of the production photos is revealed as flags printed with sepia photographs of terraced houses and cobbled streets. These flags were hung quite haphazardly so that the light gathered in their creases creating abstract, disordered shadows in contrast with the geometric silhouettes made by the structured framework representing the hotel's windows. Aside from these suspended flags/washing, Thompsons' visit to the area where he grew up was indicated via costume with the women in the ensemble wearing house dresses, aprons and headscarves as seen in fig. 24, dancing with tableware and cooking utensils, and the men in 1930s workwear.

These visual signifiers contributed to an impression of Dingle and its residents as poor and subjugated, separated from the sophistication of the hotel and its moneyed guests. Woods' costume designs and set, which was figuratively "flying the flag" for working-class identity, were examples of the scenography emphasising a potentially reductive image of Scouse spirit. In 3.14 and 3.16 I will demonstrate how Woods' romantic visualisation of 1930s Dingle, and the people who lived there, created an image that corresponds to Scouse stereotypes and idealised imaginings of Liverpool history. In doing this, Woods ran the risk of confirming 'invented traditions' of the city's past and presenting them as authentic (Boym 2001: 42). Even though, as I will discuss, when coupled with the dramaturgy of the musical, some of Woods' design decisions appear to have been knowingly tongue-in-cheek, they typify a wider tendency of Liverpool theatre to fetishise local people's historic struggles. Viewing the hardship of disadvantaged, past working-class communities through such a crude lens potentially reduces their Scouse identity to being plucky and ingenuous.

3.13 Design of *Eric's* (2008)

Eric's premiered on the 19 September 2008 at The Everyman. Unlike *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, its creative team had strong links to Liverpool. The musical was written by Liverpool-born Mark Davies Markham and directed by LIPA alumnus Jamie Lloyd. Designer Gilmour has no direct link to the city but had previously designed work for The Everyman.⁹⁰ The real *Eric's* was a live music nightclub, popular with teenagers, that was open from 1976 to 1980 near the famous Cavern venue on Matthew Street.⁹¹ *Eric's* was semi-autobiographical, inspired by Markham's own experiences of the club, and how these memories had manifested for him whilst being treated for leukaemia. No recordings of the show's score are currently available in the archive, however reviews suggest *Eric's* was a jukebox musical with Liverpool critic Liz Lacey referring to the opening number being local band Deaf School's *What a Way to End It All* and the finale, Pete Wylie's *Heart as Big as Liverpool* (Lacey 2008). At the time of writing there was also no published version of Markham's script so my references to the narrative are assembled from reviews, articles

⁹⁰ Including *The Mayor of Zalamea* (2004), *The Kindness of Strangers* (2004), and *Urban Legend* (2004) (Chapter 5).

⁹¹ Though a club of the same name was opened in the original location in 2011, it was not linked to the first and was met with outrage by the original owners and patrons and closed in 2016 (Sammons 2011).

and production photographs. This has also made referencing the production photographs found in The Everyman archive (Davies Markham 2008) difficult as I have been unable to refer to exact scenes or events in the musical.⁹²

The narrative follows the character of Joe, loosely based on Markham, exploring his memories of Eric's whilst in hospital. His fantasies manifest as flashbacks with the club being resurrected around him. Joe was played by Graham Bickley, known in the city for his long-running role in the Liverpool set BBC drama *Bread* (1986-1991). The characters Joe recalls included fictionalised versions of Liverpool musicians including Pete Burns (Stuart Ellis), Pete Wylie (Sam Donovan) and Joe Strummer, Holly Johnson and Ian McCulloch – all played by Peter Caulfield. Alongside these famous faces were characters based on more locally recognised celebrities who had once frequented Eric's, including alternative punk singer Jayne Casey (Irene Roberts).

Gilmour's design for *Eric's* suggests that she was aware of the visual and spatial similarities between The Everyman auditorium as it was in 2008, prior to its being rebuilt in 2014, and the original Eric's. The then theatre and the 1970s club were both subterranean with a lack of ventilation and exposed brickwork. In an interview with Joe Riley for the *Liverpool Echo* Davies Markham stated that the '...sense of [Eric's] space' that could be created on The Everyman stage was vital to the production's success (Davies Markham to Riley 2008b). The two venues also shared comparable status locally as Liverpool cultural icons, known especially for staging young and radical theatre, (The Everyman) and music (Eric's) in the 1970s. The production photographs show that Gilmour incorporated The Everyman space into her set design rather than attempting to disguise it. On the one hand, *Eric's* was presented as a traditional musical in the vein of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, its audience being seated, observing the dramatic action onstage. On the other, it could also be deemed an immersive experience due to Gilmour's merging of the theatricalised club with the theatre's architectural features. Gilmour's design incorporated a 'sense' of the original Eric's into a sense of space that the stage and auditorium already possessed due to their being within The Everyman. The scenography therefore gave the audience the sense of

⁹² Digital Promotional Photographs *Eric's*, [Compact Disc], Photographer: Mark Davies Markham, 2008, EVT reference, EVT/AV/000137

being within, as opposed to looking at it onstage, the original Eric's in the 1970s in tandem with their being in *The Everyman* in 2008.

The available production photographs of *Eric's* in *The Everyman* archive are extremely limited with fig. 25 the best in showing a full view of the stage. From this photograph, it appears that Gilmour's staging used the thrust setting of *The Everyman* with an elevated platform upstage. This platform was surrounded by a frame creating a separate stage within a stage effect. This secondary "stage" can be seen in figs. 26 and 27, with a low, exposed lighting rig (almost head height) above it and set up with practical microphones, guitars and drum kit for the live band. The frame that bordered the raised platform was painted to mimic water-stained concrete and brickwork (see far stage left in fig.25). This intentionally presented the club as dirty and suffering condensation from the heat and sweat of closely packed bodies, as well as blending with *The Everyman* auditorium's similar exposed brick back wall.

In *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, the action was contained within the frame of the Playhouse's proscenium arch, which acted as a separation between the audience and the performance. In *Eric's*, Gilmour used a similar framing to divide the stage into two spaces, with those occupying the platform performing a show within a show. Actors who were not on the platform at these moments subsequently inhabited the same, or at least a similar perspective to that of the audience; both being positioned to direct their attention towards the secondary stage. Though this organisation of the space, Gilmour managed the visibility of the audience, to be simultaneously watching a production about *Eric's*, and watching a gig within a reconstruction of *Eric's*. This could be seen as creating an immersive experience where audience members who had had experience of the real *Eric's* were in these moments, returned there by a change in perspective, no longer were they watching the play about *Eric's* in *The Everyman*, they were watching a gig in the club alongside characters they recognised.



Fig. 25. Production photo for *Eric's* (2008), Centre: Joe (Graham Bickley), Opening scene, Hospital, present day (Davies Markham 2008)



Fig. 26. Production photo for *Eric's* (2008), Joe and Ensemble, Hospital, present day (Davies Markham 2008)



Fig. 27. Production photo for *Eric's* (2008), Club-goers swarm Joe's hospital bed, *Eric's*, 1970s (Davies Markham 2008)

A third “stage” space was created by the use of Joes’ hospital bed. This bed initially signified the opening hospital setting, where Joe was being treated for leukaemia. Fig. 25 shows Joe, costumed in a hospital gown, performing from this bed with a line of actors in white coats, nurses’ caps and pale green belts standing behind him. In this photograph, the live band can also be seen on the platform behind the ensemble. This contained the hospital setting within the wider scenography that created the club environment. Fig 27 shows the metal chains, attached to the corners of the bed, having lifted it slightly upwards. The chronology of these photos suggests that the bed’s rising signified Joes’ flashback, transforming the hospital into the nightclub and its staff into the revellers. At this moment, the actors shed their white coats to become clubbers (fig. 27) as a banner with Eric’s logo appears to have been added (fig. 28). The images indicate that this point in the musical saw a shift in tone as well as location, the scenography visualised the hospital as a controlled, authoritarian space compared to the anarchy of the nightclub. Previous to being flown upwards, the bed signified passivity and sickness with the chains at each corner seeming to further enforce Joes’ confinement. The bed’s elevation alongside Joes’ actions saw it become his personal podium, subsequently swarmed by energetic Eric’s clubbers.⁹³

This transformation between the hospital and club scenes was accentuated by Jon Clark’s lighting design. Fig. 25 shows the hospital lit by Clark in bright white from behind, creating sinister, dramatic shadows. In fig. 28 the lighting has noticeably changed style, the “stage” lit in a saturated pink, suitable to the gig atmosphere. No longer a controlled environment, the opening hospital scenography (the bed, the clinical costumes, bright lighting) was altered and/or removed, leaving the club an anarchic, grubby, adulterated space. Gilmour’s design reflected the fact that the real Eric’s was primarily a punk music venue that was distinctly unglamorous through the drip marks on the concrete and scuffed, stripped-back floor (fig. 29). The exposed toilet (stage right, fig. 29) also indicated Eric’s unpleasant olfactory dimension. Gilmour’s placing of the toilet on the stage humorously placed all the memorable aspects of the Eric’s experience on the same level, the emerging musicians sharing the stage with the club’s amenities. Coupled with Ann Yee’s choreography, these spatial arrangements disrupted the formality that might be expected from a night at the theatre.

⁹³ The black and white striped sleeve of an actor’s club wear costume can be seen underneath his white coat in fig. 26. This suggests that the cast had these costumes on underneath the coats allowing for a quick change, possibly onstage.

In the club scenes Gilmour's costumes for the ensemble moved from the stark, white hospital uniforms towards a mix of 1970s styles that reflected the clubgoers' creative expression of their individuality. In an interview with Dominic Cavendish for *The Telegraph* (2008), Davies Markham described how having a visual identity, 'a button or a poster' (Davies Markham 2008) was more important to the emerging musicians that frequented Eric's, than their actual sound. Gilmour costumed the club's clientele in a mix of 1970s popular and subculture fashions. Specific items gave clues to the ensemble's personalities, such as the Dennis the Menace T-shirt (fig. 28). The bright costumes of the clubbers stood out against the greys of Gilmour's set (fig. 30) and contrasted with the muted colours and dated patterns worn by characters from the same era, "outside" of the club (see fig. 31). Certain pieces were also used to identify characters based on locally and nationally known celebrities. Three examples can be seen in fig. 30 (left to right): Jayne Casey in bright polka dots and petticoat; Pete Burns in glitter and a long dreadlock wig; and Holly Johnson in braces and Panama hat. As the only female principal, Jayne's dress stood out in a flamboyant display of femininity which could be seen at odds with her real-life equivalent who was known for her shaved head. Recognising that these costumes signified the famous Liverpool musicians required some previous knowledge of their real-life counterparts in order to bridge the apparent divide between their faithful recreation and Gilmour's expressive interpretation.



Fig. 28. Production photo for *Eric's* (2008), Centre: Jayne Casey (Irene Roberts), Far Right: Pete Burns (Stuart Ellis), *Eric's*, 1970s, (Davies Markham 2008)



Fig. 29. Production photo for *Eric's* (2008), Clubbers (Ensemble), *Eric's*, 1970s, (Davies Markham 2008)



Fig. 30. Production photo for *Eric's* (2008), L to R 'Jayne Casey', Pete Burns and Holly Johnson(Peter Caulfield) *Eric's*, 1970s, (Davies Markham 2008)



Fig. 31. Production photo for *Eric's* (2008), Centre: 'Reg' (Mark Moraghan), Unknown Scene, 1970s, (Davies Markham 2008)

Eric's audience were located by the scenography as simultaneously within the theatre (with its comparable space and history to the club) and within *Eric's*. The stage within a stage, and the visual moment of change from 2008 to flashback, were key in constructing the audience's perspective. It positioned them as being "there" with the clubgoers, experiencing what they were experiencing, as well as "here" in *The Everyman*, in 2008, looking back wistfully on a time presented as energised and creative. Davies Markham was clear that *Eric's* was based on his personal, idealised memories, enhanced to be: '...a fan's-eye view of the past' (Cavendish 2008b). In 3.14 I will show how the production's scenography, despite creating the club as apparently grimy and unglamorous, represented such a 'a fan's-eye' (ibid) recreation of the *Eric's* experience. And, further in 3.17 how its reception saw *Eric's* branded as an almost a spiritual experience for those who could recall the original.

3.14 Restorative nostalgia in "showing off the city":

The staging of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* can be interpreted as an exercise in restorative nostalgia, creating cultural monuments in and to past institutions that each stand for a facet of Scouse identity. The visualisation of The Adelphi hotel and *Eric's* nightclub connected a local nostalgia for attributes of Liverpool and Scouse-ness felt to be under threat or lost entirely, to two places perceived to have embodied them. Boym describes how restorative nostalgia '...manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past' (Boym 2001: 41). She explains that these 'reconstructions' (ibid) can be an attempt by communities to 'return to origins' (ibid, p.46). In recreating places, events or artefacts from the past, a community can erase anything that doesn't fit with the original's agreed narrative, or how they relate to their present-day counterparts. In theatricalising The Adelphi hotel and *Eric's* as idealised reconstructions, the two musicals bestowed the institutions with arguably exaggerated legacies, and significance to local people. This significance is revealing as to how Liverpool inhabitants in 2008 pictured their past selves (*Eric's*) and imagined their more distant past (*Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*).

Woods' design of the Adelphi was symbolic of Scouse culture as once having been successful and aspirational. The ornate interpretation of the hotel's façade and elements of its interior (the red carpet, the chandeliers) visualised the Adelphi as part of an era when Liverpool had global significance as a centre of commerce and trade and was considered a

glamorous destination. By 2008 the real Adelphi's reputation was tarnished, formerly an icon of Liverpool success, it had become considered a perilous and tawdry place to stay, an epitome of all the negative associations of Scouse.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the hotel could be seen as emblematic of how Liverpool has been commonly discredited nationally; a shadow of its former glory and now with difficulty attracting outsiders. In *Eric's*, Gilmour's scenography designated The Everyman auditorium as the interior of Eric's but unlike *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, the design included the audience within the imagined space. The audience of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* were distanced from the musical and its scenography's resurrection of a lost Liverpool institution, looking into it as a captured snapshot of the past. *Eric's* scenography was a more intimate monument to a lost experience where audience members who remembered the original were able to (re)visit the club's sense of place on The Everyman's stage space.

The nostalgia for Eric's nightclub could be connected to a longing for a time when Scouse culture was considered more globally significant. The club launched and nurtured iconic bands including Echo and the Bunnymen, Big in Japan, Frankie Goes to Hollywood and The Deaf School. These bands were and remain famous beyond Liverpool, even if the club does not. Gilmour's scenography manifested the club space and the identities it contained (and arguably produced) as radical and rebellious. Scouse identity has been characterised as having just such a revolutionary spirit that could be seen as personified in the young Liverpool clubbers with their expressive costumes. The colourful lighting, grimy sweat-stained paint effect of the club walls and the customised, bizarre costumes of its regulars indicated that the club was nonconformist and unconventional. It represented an unorthodox, alternative to the mundanity represented by the brown costumes of 1970s Liverpool worn by characters outside of the club. This sense of Eric's as somewhere anarchic, was also shown through the visual dramaturgy when Joes' flashback overtook the austere hospital setting; the bed flying upwards and the medical white coats shed to reveal the bright club wear beneath. Gilmour's design presented *Eric's* as unsanitary but full of colour. The eccentricity of the characters that frequented the club was seen as embodying the radical Scouse identity felt to be largely absent from the ECOC cultural events.

⁹⁴ In their chapter 'Tourism and Victimization' in *The International Handbook of Victimology* (2010) Rob Mawby, Elaine Barclay and Carol Jones claim that in 2006 the Adelphi was the site of 81% of all hotel room burglaries in the city (Mawby, Barclay and Jones 2010: 332).

The scenography of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* endeavoured to resurrect 'lost homes' (Boym 2001: 251) of Scouse identity on the stages of The Everyman and Playhouse, institutions that themselves had battled to preserve their reputation as icons of Liverpool culture. In both musicals, it appears that the audiences were being invited to be nostalgic for these "lost" periods of Liverpool history through seeing selected icons associated with them restored. Whilst knowing what they were looking at was a theatrical construct, the audience were encouraged by such visualisations to be nostalgic for the past. The stage incarnations of *Eric's* and *The Adelphi*, brought back to their imagined former glory, were in tension with their contemporaneous real-life equivalents on Matthew Street and Ranelagh Place, five minutes' walk away from the theatres. During the ECOC, tourists were being encouraged to visit the fictionalised *Eric's* and *Adelphi*, and by doing so also visit the city's past, rather than engage with the real Liverpool of here and now, or to imagine its future.

3.15 Romanticising Liverpool history

The glorification of spaces such as *The Adelphi* and *Eric's* which held happy memories or were points of pride for local people was perhaps to be expected during Liverpool's year as the ECOC in 2008 and the theatres' mandate to be "showing off the city". Yet, Boym cautions that the 'total restoration of extinct creatures' can be '...a tranquilizer' that serves to placate and quiet those whom feel the treasured originals to be lost (Boym 2003: 33). Woods and Gilmour's designs' revival of the 'extinct' spaces could be seen as weak consolation for local audiences who still mourned the loss of their real-life counterparts and what they represented in terms of Liverpool identity. Further, both musicals utilised flashbacks as a dramaturgical device with the past presented as favourable in relation to the present in ways that were potentially problematic. Through the musicals' visualisation of Liverpool's past and those that inhabited it, the city as it was in 2008 was either mocked as inferior or disregarded completely. In particular *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi's* scenography romanticised poverty in the city, fetishizing the disadvantaged, working-class⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Though outside of the remit of this thesis, it is of interest that in *Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi* the Scouse voice was established as standing for working-class Liverpool. It was also used as shorthand for the city's refusal to conform. In Act 1, Scene 6 Roy Rogers (Nick Smithers) tries to seduce chambermaid Babs (Helen Carter) by teaching her American slang for terms of endearment. She rebuffs him with various Liverpool idiom's for 'go away': 'you're doin me'ead ...Ta ra, Divvy' (Willmott 2012: 33). In her rejection of the

of Liverpool's past. Here, I will explore whether Woods' scenography contributed to this possibly unhealthy dynamic, where the production risked enforcing the idea that the not only the hotel's, but the city's best days were behind it.



Fig. 32. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 3, Ensemble as the women of Dingle with Thompson (centre), Dingle, 1930s (Day 2008)

wealthy, American star, Babs is seen to retreat further into her Scouse voice, transposing it as an act of self-assertion rather than something to be ridiculed, hidden or escaped.



Fig. 33. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 3, Ensemble as the men of Dingle, bin-lid dance routine, Dingle, 1930s (Day 2008)

For Thompsons' return to Dingle (Act 1, Scene 3), Woods' visualised the underprivileged district in a design that paid homage to an image of Liverpool's past working class as a homogenous, Scouse community who were resilient and proud. The stringing of the stage with the washing lines festooned with photographs of 1930s Liverpool printed on brown fabric, appeared to raise banners for the city's more deprived areas. With the centre of the city in 2008 being covered in ECOC flags promoting the acceptable face of Liverpool culture, these banners flew in celebration of the city's grittier, industrial past. Thompsons' homecoming was gaily received as the return of the prodigal Scouse son with his family and friends seeing him as having transcended his roots (and Scouse-ness) by working at The Adelphi with its high-class clientele (Willmott 2012: 13).⁹⁶ The women were costumed as stereotypical "Mam" characters (2.6.2) in aprons and headscarves. Fig. 32 shows the women surrounding Thompson (centre), dancing and using kitchen items to create percussion. Thompsons' improvement in circumstances was indicated by his costume in

⁹⁶ When Thompson reveals to his mother that he dropped out of university, she is placated by the news that he has a job at the hotel, regarding it as having the same potential for social mobility.

this scene, a block coloured smart suit against the women's patterned dresses. This was followed by the male characters of Dingle performing a tap routine with bin lids attached to their shoes (fig. 33). Local audiences may well have found a satirical humour in Woods' simplification of 1930s Dingle. His design, coupled with Andrew Wright's choreography, appears to have been purposefully comedic. The bin lids dance routine, in particular, looks to have been a moment of parody that acknowledged how such Scouse characters have commonly been stereotyped. Yet, as I will show in 3.16, scrutiny of the press reception reveals that this was not the universal interpretation, with outsiders especially considering the scenes as striving to be an emotive, authentic recollection of a bygone time. In these readings, Woods' pantomimic visualisation of Scouse 'traditions', the bin-lid dancing, flags etc., were not seen as amusingly ridiculous, but as genuine, heart-warming local nostalgia.

The romanticising of the past in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* can also be observed by comparing the scenography of scenes set in the hotel in the 1930s, with those set in the modern day. The musical's opening scene (fig. 34), contained numerous references to contemporary vilified Scouse identities through the costumes of the 2008 guests. The garish outfits jarred with the stately structure representing the hotel's entrance and with the refined 1940s grey suit and hat of Alice,⁹⁷ softly backlit on the central platform, her back turned to the present-day happenings. Willmott described the queue of people checking in in his stage directions as including '...Hen party girls... Liverpool Supporter... Chav Husband... Chav Wife... Everton Supporter' (Willmott 2012: 1). Clearly Willmott intended this queue to appear unsophisticated, especially considering his use of 'Chav' as an adjective, a pejorative epithet used to describe a working-class, anti-social stereotype which it has been repeatedly levelled at people from northern cities like Liverpool.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ As Alice has her back turned in this photo, it is impossible to tell whether she was being played by Julie Atherton (Young Alice) or Natasha Searle (Older Alice).

⁹⁸ Owen Jones examines how the slur has endured as part of a smear campaign against the working class, and the north especially, in his popular sociological book *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (2011), pp. 80-81.



Fig. 34. 'Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 1, Scene 1, Ensemble as the modern-day Adelphi hotel staff and guests with Alice visible on the "roof", The Adelphi reception, 2008 (Day 2008)

The queue featured coded visual examples of "Scouse-Bird" (2.6.3) characters. Fig. 34 shows four actors (stage left) fully costumed in bright pink including their suitcases. These characters form two groupings, the two in the foreground representing a hen party and the two behind wearing fascinators and dresses typical of race-goers. One of the women in the hen party wears a short-ruffled dress or skirt and top combination, a pink wig and fairy wings, the other a tracksuit adorned with badges. Whilst wearing fancy dress on hen and stag parties is by no means unique to Liverpool, it is exceptionally popular. The race-goers' outfits would be familiar to Liverpool residents as cartoonish impersonations of the ensembles worn for the annual 'Ladies Day' at the Aintree racecourse, an important event in Liverpool's social calendar. The women were presented as having dressed in a way that they felt was appropriate for their respective occasions and that this was intended to be found humorous by the audience. Similarly, to the way the Dingle dance routine can be considered as a parody of Scouse-mess, this humour could be viewed as knowingly poking fun at "Scouse-Bird" stereotypes. However, the ubiquity of such caricatures and the middle-class Playhouse audience being invited to laugh at these working-class characters makes this humour problematic. These costumes presented the 2008 hotel visitors as vulgar

in comparison to the elegant guests of the 1930s. Whilst the hotel's past was visualised as a grand place, occupied by high-class patrons that deserved veneration, the present hotel was depicted as scruffy, patronised by Scouse stereotypes who invited mockery.

3.16 Press reception of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's*

Local press was quick to enshrine *Eric's* and *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi's* as belonging to the city and representing a much-needed injection of Scouse culture into the ECOC programme. Though national attention was full of praise for the musicals as light-hearted fun, they were dismissive of any likelihood that they may appeal outside of the city. This supports my argument that Made in Liverpool productions are frequently regarded as having little or no relevance beyond Merseyside. Furthermore, productions whose scenography and narratives are exceptionally locally focused are seen nationally as confirming the city's reputation for being overly insular. As with *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*, there was little specific mention of the set design in the majority of the reviews.⁹⁹

Local coverage of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* was almost unanimous in its praise with Riley in the *Liverpool Echo* branding it '...an unequivocal thumbs up' (Riley 2008a). Vicky Anderson in *The Liverpool Daily Post* claimed that the show would be 'recalled with affection for years' (Anderson 2008). Anderson and Riley viewed Woods' scenography as demonstrative of the musicals ambition by its scale and inclusion of details that referenced the hotel's glamorous past. Riley considered such glitz (the chandeliers, dress of 1930s guests) as a meditation on Scouse resilience, symbolic of how Liverpool had once '... forgot its woes and dressed up for family dos' (Riley *ibid*). Though Riley did not overtly state that such Scouse spirit (a robustness in the face of hard times) was lacking from present day Liverpool, the tone of his review suggested a wistfulness for the city as celebrated in those flashbacks.

⁹⁹ Unless otherwise stated, reviews relating to *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* are drawn from: Press Review Pack *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*. 2008, EVT Reference, Playhouse Box (2012) and those relating to *Eric's* from: Press Review Pack *Eric's*, [Printed Material], 2008, EVT reference: EVT/PR/000484

Riley was also defensive as to the quality of the production despite acknowledging it was ‘unlikely to gather laurels in the West End’ (Riley *ibid*). His attitude seems to have been typical of the local press including an unknown author in *The Liverpool Daily Post* Sunday cultural supplement, who defined the show as ‘belonging’ to Liverpool. The author argued that though ‘Some may argue it won’t transfer well outside of the city...’, Liverpool audiences should be unconcerned and take pride in it as ‘...something that’s been written by us, for us.’ (Anon 2008a). Though such ownership of the production demonstrates how *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* generated local patriotism, it also presumed that the very localism the press referred to would render it nonsensical nationally, and, as such, unworthy of praise or awards. Such eagerness to lay claim to *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, also apparently choose to ignore that the show was not written, directed or designed by anyone from Liverpool.

This demonstrates a recognition within the local press that *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*’s Liverpool specificity would likely see it denigrated by reviewers in national publications. Although this recognition did not explicitly include the scenography, Woods’ design was integral to the productions presentation of the bygone Adelphi and wider Liverpool settings as romanticised Scouse histories. It was this romanticism that reviewers writing for publications outsider of Liverpool, including Alfred Hickling (*The Guardian*) High (*WhatOnStage*) and Wendy Fairbank (*Theatreworld Internet Magazine*), criticised as amplifying the show’s ‘unashamedly sentimental plot’ (Hickling 2008a), with the ‘local references falling flat’ (Fairbank 2008) for those not from Liverpool. High considers Woods’ design for the hotel in its heyday as far removed from ‘...the tired façade of the building that stands today’ (High 2008), highlighting the decline of the very institution being celebrated.

However, despite being critical of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*’s nostalgic lens on Liverpool history, a number of reviewers writing for publications outside of Liverpool expressed admiration for the scenes following Thompsons’ return to Dingle. Although, as I discussed in 3.15, these scenes and their scenographic realisation can be deemed problematic in their simplification of Scouse working-class identities, critics including Hickling, Dominic Cavendish in *The Telegraph* (2008) and Debbie Johnson in *The Metro* (2008) cited these moments as authentic stagings of Scouse culture. Again, none included the design in their reviews but they referred to particular images, such as the bin-lid tap dance routine as a ‘...great moment for Thompson and his old scouser chums’ (Hickling 2008a) and ‘truly

rousing to the home crowd' (Johnson 2008a). Their comments are revealing as to the persistence of Scouse stereotypes¹⁰⁰ in that they perceived these moments, which I have discussed as most probably intended as comic parody, as expressions of Liverpool pride which they presumed would have engendered an emotional response from a local audience.

There was a marked change of attitude in the local press between their coverage of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* with *The Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Liverpool Echo* so enthusiastic about the latter that they appeared to disavow their praise of the former. The general opinion expressed was that the nostalgia of *Eric's* was superior to that of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* which Riley re-classified as '...posturing sentiment' (Riley 2008c). *Eric's* was perceived as having avoided '...becoming an insular and garish Liverpudlian love in' and '...the terrible, mawkish stereotypes' (Anon, *The Liverpool Daily Post* 2008c) frequently associated with the city celebrating itself. Reviewers praised Gilmour's design as having allowed those who had experienced *Eric's* to revisit their memories good and bad. An unknown writer on the local tourism blog *Welcome to Liverpool*, extolled Gilmour as having captured the '...heat and sweat, the leaking lavatories and the temperamental sound system perfectly.' (Anon 2008d). The scenography was seen as having encapsulated the atmosphere of the original club, rather than presenting an idealised version of it as Woods had done with the Adelphi.

This distinction was not drawn in reviews for publications outside of the city, which widely considered *Eric's* local references overly self-referential. Though *Eric's* setting was not romanticised in the manner of Woods' Adelphi, the theatrical version of the club was felt to be equivalently distanced from Liverpool as experienced in 2008. In *The Stage* Carole Baldock (2008) identified the enthusiastic reception of local audiences as '...mostly for the sake of the good old days and golden oldies – once upon a time where we were all oh so young' (Baldock 2008). Baldock's folkloric language ('once upon a time') situated *Eric's* as a mythologised depiction of the city's past, designed to stir audiences to sentimentality in

¹⁰⁰ Cavendish also claimed that the character of Thompsons complaint that he had been branded 'once a thief, always a thief' would '... strike a chord with an audience in a city as maligned as Liverpool.' (Cavendish 2008a), In this, Cavendish recognised the endurance of Liverpool's defamation whilst simultaneously proliferating one of its most unshakable stereotypes – as a city with unusually high levels of theft.

reminiscing about their own youth. Johnson in *The Metro* (2008) evaluated the musical similarly to *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* as having ‘...cringe factor’ (Johnson 2008b). Mark Fisher in *The Guardian* (2008) described the experience of being in the audience as akin to being a ‘...cultural anthropologist’ (Fisher 2008a), with the local references completely alien to outsiders.¹⁰¹ Though there is no definite reference to Gilmour’s design within these reviews, the scenography of *Eric’s* formed a crucial aspect of the local references and in-jokes that national reviewers seem to have found largely impenetrable.

The mixed response, apparently divided on local and national platforms, illuminates The Everyman and Playhouses’ constant conflict of interests. During the period of the ECOC, the theatres requirement to stage productions that were seen locally to spotlight Liverpool and Liverpool identity but that would also be considered relevant beyond it, was particularly amplified due to the city’s increased global attention. How *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric’s* were visualised was recognised as celebratory of Liverpool culture but also carried the weight of the designs potentially amounting to memorials. National press coverage saw the rose-tinted restoration of The Adelphi and *Eric’s* as ultimately reductive, proof that all Liverpool had to “show off” for the Capital of Culture was historic. Reception of the musicals demonstrated how the real *Eric’s* and The Adelphi had both become places where things had happened ‘A long time ago, far away...’ (Lacey 2008) and ‘Once upon a time’ (Baldock *ibid*). The reviewers’ language shows how the original institutions had evolved into Liverpool legends with Woods’ and Gilmour’s designs bridging the gap between real memories of the places and their imagined significance for Liverpool culture and Scouse identity.

¹⁰¹ It is reasonable to assume that Fisher was exaggerating Liverpool’s other-ness for comic affect. He also highlighted that watching *Eric’s* as part of the target audience (Fisher is originally from Liverpool) made it impossible for him to review as it was too close to his own life.

3.17 Mythologising the city



Fig. 35. Production photo for *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), Act 2, Scene 2 ‘Britannia’ (Actor Unknown), The Adelphi accounts department, 1930s (Day 2008)

The imagined significance of The Adelphi hotel and Eric’s in local imagination is in part due to their being connected to a mythological concept of a past Liverpool. This myth perpetuates an image of the city as once inhabited by a homogenous community who shared a Scouse culture perceived to be now lost under the forceful standardisation of globalisation. The scenography of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric’s* visualised both places and people that had a real-world basis but also presented a mythic conception of Scouse identity and Liverpool. The scenography theatricalised The Adelphi and Eric’s, viewing the originals through a folkloric lens. This can be seen as a purposeful act of myth-making, an act of restorative nostalgia that alongside the idealisation of the “lost” hotel and club, created images and traditions for the imagined Scouse ‘lost home’ (Boym 2001: 251) and community.

Scouse identity is strongly associated with the telling of stories, and for those stories to be “tall”, embroidered to make them more interesting. The very title of *Once upon a Time at the*

Adelphi established the musical as mythologising the hotel's history and Woods scenography contributed to its whimsical presentation of The Adelphi's own "tall" stories. How various rumours and truths relating to the hotel were visualised disrupted any easy distinction on behalf of the audience as to what they could class as verifiable histories and those which were local legends. Woods' design materialised out of the surrounding darkness by Cracknell's lighting, which cloaked the framework of The Adelphi in shadows and haze, giving the hotel a mystical quality. This established the production as having no clear separation between the imagined and the factual. The true event of Roy Roger's horse Trigger staying in the hotel was recreated with an unrealistic puppet (fig.18) but the appearance of 'Britannia' in the hotel's accounts department (fig. 35) was performed by a costumed actor, giving the fantasy corporeality. These design decisions separated the hotel from any realism, inviting the audience to understand the production as fanciful entertainment as opposed to accurate documentary. However, this is not without issue, as in positioning past Liverpool as escapist, the production potentially implied the city in 2008 was somewhere to be escaped from.



Fig. 36 L to R: Jayne Casey, Ken Testi, Norman Killon and Boxhead on the set of *Eric's*, Photographer Unknown, 2008

Though *Eric's* did not contain any make-believe manifestations within the musical's narrative, the experience of seeing the production for local audiences who remembered the club could be seen as a comparable act of mythologising. The production presented their lived experience back to them, elevated by the dramatic scenography. The reviews on *Liverpool Confidential* (Lacey 2008), and in the *Liverpool Echo* (Riley 2008c) and *The Liverpool Daily Post* (Anon 2008c) all reported the presence of local celebrities in the audience who came to see the fictionalised versions of themselves. Riley (2008) referred to Casey and Bill Drummond on opening night '...seeing their past lives paraded in a wider cavalcade of clashing egos and outlandish costumery' (Riley 2008c). The real Casey, Ken Testi, Norman Killon and Boxhead (fig. 36) were also photographed sat on Gilmour's set that ran within a retrospective on the club in the *Liverpool Echo* (Anon 2008e). The convergence of the real-life celebrities, especially Casey, who in 2008 was one of the chief curators of the ECOC, their memories and their theatricalised counterparts and space contributed to the idea of the show as a commemoration. The endorsement of those who were there, and who were being represented was seen as a validation of the musical's idealised presentation of the club and how they, and Liverpool had once been.

3.18 Conclusion

Once upon a Time at the Adelphi and *Eric's* were marketed as celebrating Liverpool through the hotel and nightclub as symbols of the city and of Scouse identity, yet the scenography emphasised that this celebration was for something lost. This "something" was presented as both tangible, in the hotel and club no longer being the impressive destinations they historically were, and intangible in Scouse culture being shown as having degraded from the working-class charm of past-Dingle, or the creativity of Liverpool club kids, to today's unruly hotel guests and Joe's bleak hospital ward. The loss of status for the real-life Adelphi was in part a result of the changed economic landscape. The decline of Liverpool's role as a major port with reduction of well-heeled travellers going to and from the city by sea negated the need for such a grand hotel. The closure of *Eric's* was also related to the changing culture of the city, where noise licensing, high rents and globalisation made it increasingly difficult for such small independent venues to survive. The nostalgia then for both of these buildings was a fragment of the much wider nostalgia for what they represented; the loss of profitable industry and worldwide significance (The Adelphi) and a departure from grassroots, locally lead culture (*Eric's*).

The nostalgia that *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* exploited brought audiences together as an imagined Liverpool/Scouse community, uniting them in the security of known local settings as reconstructed by Wood and Gilmour's designs. The shows' unapologetic prioritising of local appeal over wider comprehension appeared to frustrate London critics. Even within otherwise positive reviews, there was tacit agreement that the musicals would not thrive outside of their frame of local reference. This is a conviction that I will return to across my case studies but emerges as especially acute during the ECOC years when the city was placing its culture under the spotlight of global evaluation. Liverpool theatre that focuses on local stories, with scenography that depends upon its audience's local, cultural knowledge, is frequently critiqued by outsiders as parochial. In *Staging the UK* (2005) Jen Harvie writes that:

...the regional model has potentially masked an enduring paternalistic metropolitanism as governments have endeavoured to professionalise or raise to metropolitan standards – regional practice. (Harvie 2005: 17)

Harvie here reflects on the enduring London-centric view that regional theatre is not at the same standard or is not as serious as that created in the capital and must 'raise its standards' (ibid) in order to be taken seriously. In the cases of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's* this seems to have been tied to a feeling of exasperation on the part of national critics that their reading of the productions was hindered by their lack of familiarity with the local in-jokes and visual references being made. Cavendish and Hickling (2008) both stated in their subsequent reviews that '...you probably had to be there [at the original *Eric's*]' to appreciate Davies-Markham's subtleties. This reliance on the Scouse references requiring local cultural and experiential knowledge was painted in national criticism as parochial. Though London's West End may feature many musicals that could be accused of as being shallow and unexacting in the vein of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*, it is unlikely they would be dismissed as similarly limited.

Conversely, *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* was commended in some national reviews for the Dingle set scenes, which were interpreted as an authentic depiction of Scouse culture by Woods. Yet, Woods' visualisation of the working-class district and its inhabitants, although probably satirical, exploited sentimentalised Scouse stereotypes that the city has tried to distance itself from. The rose-tinted theatrical visualisation of Liverpool's past cast doubt as

to the authenticity of such nostalgia and reflected negatively on the city's present by comparison. Based on such fictionalised, embellished heritage, it was easier for outsiders to dismiss the city's pride as sentimentalised navel gazing. In resurrecting the Adelphi and Eric's scenographically as the key ECOC celebratory productions, The Everyman and Playhouse appear complicit in the national consensus that Liverpool's time was not (as sung in a refrain through *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*) 'here again', but could only be celebrated through nostalgic, restorative histories.

Massey cautions that nostalgia for the place one considers 'home', whilst generally instinctive and harmless, can risk a fixing of that place and its past '...in aspic' (Massey 2004: 123). She points to the romanticising of young men who migrate from the north of the UK, to the south, imagining the '...the place they used to be as it used to be' (ibid). This conception of 'home' as fixed was symbolised by the dramatic revivals of The Adelphi and Eric's, each design signifying a '...going back in both space and time. Back to familiar things' (Massey 2004: 124). The scenography allowed the audiences to revisit those spaces and their memories, or imaginings of them, as pinnacles of Liverpool cultural identity. These restorative histories, and the nostalgia they represent, could be considered a potentially reductive or limited mode of Made in Liverpool work and accompanying scenography. This is not to make a value judgement on the perceived production values or quality of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* and *Eric's*, nor to ignore their positive reception especially in local press. Instead, I draw attention to how in these productions, the designers' concentration on the resurrection and thus recovery of "lost" Scouse institutions is potentially at the expense of paying similar tribute to contemporary local culture and experience. This continuous focus on the city's past as superior to its present risks confirming the prejudice Liverpool frequently faces in popular culture. Furthermore, the viewing of the past through such a rose-tinted lens denies the heterogeneous make-up of the city and of Scouse identities, in favour of an idealistic visioning of a united, homogenous past.

3.19 Summary of Chapter 3

In this two-part chapter, I explored the ways in which the scenography of four case studies contributed to the presentation of Liverpool identity on stage immediately preceding and during Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture. The productions I analysed

revealed a change in the visualisation of Liverpool which illustrates how different scenographic strategies have been utilised by designers in order to present facets of Scouse identity and manifest connections with local, and to a lesser extent, non-local audiences. In moving from designs that sought to interrogate the ECOC's impact on local people to lavish musicals that celebrated the city's past, The Everyman and Playhouse demonstrated how Scouse identity has frequently been presented as inherently nostalgic. The productions' fixation on the past risked being read as a preoccupation with Liverpool's historic glory – an accusation often levelled at the city by outsiders who take such rose-tinted nostalgia as proof of the residents' sentimental mindset.

I observed a marked change between the themes spotlighted within The Everyman and Playhouse's preparatory years and 2008 itself, emphasised by the productions' scenography. *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* visually demonstrated the disruptive effects of the ECOC's regeneration on certain Liverpool communities with designs that symbolised ways in which some Scouse identities had been side-lined from the celebrations. These working-class, marginalised Scouse identities were subtly subverted through the narratives of the plays and by the scenography. The recognition of the city as being unfixed, what Massey has referred to as a, '...space of loose ends and missing links' (Massey 2004: 12), was inbuilt into the layered scenography of *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance*. Bailey and Murchison's designs invited the audience to question how Liverpool was being changed by the ECOC by visualising how such regeneration was functioning at different levels, and questioning who was truly benefitting

The designers of the productions considered within Part 1 conditioned the gaze of the audiences to be critical, to take a discursive perspective on the theatricalised events depicted, and the ECOC as a whole. The layered scenography invited questions as to who the ECOC was truly for, and within that, what Liverpool was and had historically included and excluded. In contrast, the 2008 musicals offered a comforting familiarity, the nostalgia they celebrated framed as reassuring. Woods' and Gilmour's designs, focussed on being recognisable, materially and atmospherically, to local audiences rather than offering new perspectives. Their set designs were fantastical re-imagining of real locations at their zenith: romanticised, glitzy theatrical counterparts to the real hotel and club. The sentimental interpretation of past places and the Scouse identities that frequented them, invited the audience to make unfavourable comparisons to their modern real-world counterparts, as

did the exploiting of Scouse stereotypes for comic effect. This emphasised the theatres' shift in 2008 to uncritical commemoration, utilising this nostalgia that leant heavily on imagined and idealised histories.

In Chapter 4 I shall further explore how the designers of Made in Liverpool productions appear to have made use of nostalgia. These productions differed from the absolute celebratory tone of the 2008 musicals, but also utilised a form of restorative nostalgia within their set and costume designs. This nostalgia was dependent on a problematic acceptance of Liverpool and Scouse identities as having a shared homogenous history. The scenography of the case studies that I have designated as "It happened right here" productions, featured domestic interiors with precise Liverpool addresses. In doing so, the designers presented close Scouse family units as symbolic of the imagined, once-harmonised fixed community of the city.

Chapter 4
It Happened Right Here

...there is no such place as *Liverpool*. Have you ever seen a real liver bird? Pull the other one. We are all figments of each other's imaginations.

Diane Samuels and Tracy-Ann Oberman 2008: 82

4. It happened right here

In the preceding two-part chapter, I discussed case study productions that shared visual and narrative themes and which occurred during or close to Liverpool's ECOC year, 2008. In this chapter I now consider three productions that relate to the sense of nostalgia which I have uncovered as a repeated trope within Made in Liverpool work. This nostalgia differs from the restorative reminiscing that I observed in the 2008 musicals but is similarly tied to imaginings and memories of real places. The three case studies – *The Way Home* (2006), *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008) and *Hope Place* (2014) – were all set at precise Liverpool locations, the latter two in close proximity to The Everyman itself. For this reason, I have titled this chapter “it happened right here”. The title also functions as a shorthand to refer to how the scenography of these productions emphasised that the events depicted within these dramas happened “here”. This “here” was a visualisation of Liverpool intended to be instantly recognisable to audiences (local or not) who were watching the play within The Everyman.

The first two case studies were written by local authors with designers from outside of the city, both of whose work I have previously considered in Chapter 3. *The Way Home* was the first major work to be staged by Liverpool author Chloë Moss, and was designed by Bob Bailey (*Paradise Bound*, 3.2). *3 Sisters on Hope Street* is a retelling of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1901) collaboratively written for The Everyman by Diane Samuels and Tracy-Ann Oberman and designed by Ruairi Murchison (*Intemperance*, 3.3). My third case study *Hope Place* differs slightly as Liverpool-born writer, Michael Wynne was better established than Moss, Samuels and Oberman, and the show's designer Peter McKintosh is from Liverpool. The three plays (2006, 2008 and 2014) took place over eight years which included the lead up and celebration of the ECOC, and the opening season of the rebuilt Everyman, an important period in the theatre's consideration of its identity and cultural output. These productions demonstrate that at these key moments, Gemma Bodinetz and Deborah Aydon decided to produce plays that tapped into local belief that there exists (or once

existed) a coherent Liverpool kinship. I will show how this kinship fetishizes Scouse as a place-determined identity.

The Way Home and *Hope Place* were set respectively in 2006 and 2014, contemporaneous to when they were produced, whilst the events of *3 Sisters on Hope Street* are stated in the text as occurring between 1946 and 1948. The plays' authors all determine the dramas as occurring at exact Liverpool locations, as specified within the stage directions of the published texts (Moss 2006, Samuels & Oberman 2008, Wynne 2014). *The Way Home* is set on Oil Street in Liverpool and *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place* on Hope Street, the same street as *The Everyman*. Through an analysis of their designs, I will show how these precise settings, emphasised by the scenography, exploited local audiences' familiarity with the locations presented. In doing so, the designers reinforced the perception that these productions were authentic depictions of the city and of experiences that had "happened right here".

Each play centres on the experience of a Liverpool family. Bailey, Murchison and McKintosh using similar scenographic approaches to present these families and their homes as symbolic of Liverpool kinship. The set designs of the three case studies each included a variation on a realistic, domestic interior with a fourth wall removed. These "rooms" were organised around a kitchen or dining room table which was utilised as a central playing space. These tables were used by the directors as an anchoring point for each of the families' dramas, becoming the ocular centre of *The Everyman*'s thrust-stage space. I will demonstrate how the families depicted in these productions build on the observations I made in 3.7 with regards to their intimacy being symbolic of a wider, imagined kinship between people who identify as Scouse. In this chapter I examine how the designers' interpretations of these domestic households created a sense of belonging and of the space as "home". This enabled me to draw conclusions as to what this presentation may symbolise in terms of the productions' wider representation of Liverpool and of Scouse identity, taking their depictions of local homes as microcosms of the whole city.

In each production, the families perceive themselves and their homes' integrity to be endangered by a potential family break-up and the intersectional identities of the younger generation. This is problematic as it suggests there is a singular, fixed version of Scouse

identity that can be considered authentic. Doreen Massey cautions against such ‘...claims to authenticity based on notions of unchanging identity’ (Massey 2005:10) as spaces and the identities within them are constituted through their relationships to each other and their practices. The narratives of the case studies question whether a person can be both Scouse and part of the Travelling¹⁰² community (*The Way Home*), Scouse and Jewish (*3 Sisters on Hope Street*), or Scouse and middle-class (*Hope Place*) without contradiction. In my analysis, I will show how the perceived fracturing and intersectionality of Scouse-ness, as embodied by the family units, was seen as a threat to their primary identities. My focus will be on how the concept of Liverpool as having once been inhabited by a harmonious Scouse community was visualised through the scenography.

4.1 Design and marketing of *The Way Home* (2006)

The Way Home opened on 20 October 2006, the second collaboration that year at The Everyman between designer Bailey and director Sue Dunerdale. Bailey’s design employed similar design strategies to the previous production he had worked on with Dunerdale, *Paradise Bound* (3.2). These included the partial exposing of The Everyman’s back wall, the bisection of the back wall and use of one setting for two distinct places. The two productions also had thematic overlaps, namely a conflict over who could claim ownership of Liverpool space. Whilst in *Paradise Bound*, this tension was visualised as being between local people and the image of Liverpool being perpetuated by the official narrative of the ECOC, in *The Way Home*, the battle was among differing factions of the community, who both saw themselves as local and belonging.

The Way Home’s narrative follows the friendship of two teenage boys living on Oil Street: Bobby Thompson (Joe Shipman) and Irish Traveller Daniel O’Connor (Eamonn Owens). Daniel lives with his family in ‘Curzon Park’, a Traveller’s caravan site based on the real-life Tara park site on Oil Street. Moss undertook extensive first-hand research for the text, with visits to the Tara Park site and interviews with its inhabitants (Moss 2006: 2). The

¹⁰² Throughout this chapter I describe characters depicted in *The Way Home* as members of the Travelling community or Travellers. Though such identity is often referred to as being part of the Traveler community, I have chosen to use the former spelling according to Moss’s own description of the characters as ‘Irish Travellers’ (Moss 2006: 2). Moss’s naming the identity thus also draws a distinction that differentiates the Travellers from other Gypsy identities such as Romani.

boys' families were shown as unstable and on the brink of being irretrievably broken. Daniels' mother is in hospital and her role filled by his aunt, Margaret O'Driscoll (Claire Cogan) who attempts to temper his volatile, sometimes violent father Felix O'Connor (Luke Hayden). Bobby's father Paul (Nick Moss) is struggling to find employment whilst his relationship with Bobby's mother Ang (Leanne Best) is at breaking point. The casting included several well-known local actors, including Leanne Best (*Unprotected*, 2006; *Educating Rita*, 2015) and Nick Moss (*Urban Legend* 2004).

The Everyman and Playhouse appear to have been consciously trying to show the Tara Park residents as included under the umbrella of Scouse identity. This can also be inferred by how, during the run of *The Way Home*, The Everyman hosted a one-night workshop with children from the Tara Park site who were invited to perform their own work on top of Bailey's set.¹⁰³ This was intended to bring the Traveller community, who were consulted by Moss as part of the research process for the play, into the theatre. The young people involved were given the opportunity to articulate their experiences within the framework set by the play's themes, on Bailey's theatricalisation of their homes. However, when contextualised within *The Way Home's* wider marketing, this appears to have been rather a tokenistic, as opposed to genuinely inclusive, gesture. The theatres wanted to be seen as encompassing the Tara Park residents within their Made in Liverpool remit, yet this was contradicted by certain marketing strategies which promoted the view that the identities, Scouse and Traveller, were incompatible. The majority of the production's promotion highlighted the division between Daniel and Bobby. Archived flyers feature the slogan 'Two lives yards and yet worlds apart' (2006).¹⁰⁴ This slogan was a reference to how close Tara Park caravan site is to the homes of those who oppose its presence. This opposition

¹⁰³Digital Photographs *The Way Home*: depicting children and cast; Improbable: children at an event; Travellers: depicting children, guests and performance, [Compact Disc], Photographer: Unknown, 2006, EVT Reference, EVT/AV/000100

¹⁰⁴ The flyer artwork which became the subsequent cover image of the published script (Moss 2006), included this slogan and a photograph, manipulated to resemble stencilled graffiti on a brick wall, of the two boys on bicycles. A second flyer, for Liverpool brewery Cain's Irish Festival, advertised the production with a photograph showing unknown boys in bright colours, freely riding their bikes along a coastal path. The difference between the two depictions of the boys; one urban and menacing, the other rural and innocent, demonstrates a degree of equivocation as to how the theatres wanted to portray the play's protagonists. See: Press adverts from the *Maghull* and *Aintree Star*, *West Derby* and *Tuebrook Mersey* and *Anfield* and *Walton Star* and associated administrative material – *The Way Home*, [Printed Material], 2006, EVT Reference, EVT/PF/002422

was discussed by actors Moss (Paul) and Hayden (Felix) in a promotional interview with the BBC (2006). They described how the Travelling community were viewed in Liverpool as criminals by working-class Liverpool families, who were in turn called criminals by the upper and middle classes.¹⁰⁵ Bailey's design underscored how Moss's narrative tried to reconcile the communities and present them as having a shared Scouse identity, despite, as the marketing recognised, this was widely refuted by local people.



Fig. 37. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), Scene 1, Downstage, L to R: Bobby (Joe Shipman) and Daniel (Eamonn Owens), (Vaughan 2006)

¹⁰⁵This was also demonstrated within Chloë Moss's script with Paul repeatedly articulating his prejudice against the Tara Park Travellers, cautioning Bobby to lock away the tools in case the 'Gyppos' steal them (Moss 2006: 31).



Fig. 38. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), Scene 1, Felix (Luke Hayden).
Vaughan 2006)

The play takes place within Bobby's living room and the interior of Daniels' caravan and in their immediate vicinity. Moss's stage directions state that Scenes 6 and 10 occur in Otterspool (Moss 2006: 38). Otterspool Promenade is a riverside walk along the river Mersey. However, the production photographs available in The Everyman archive¹⁰⁶ do not show any additions or modifications made to the stage design having been made to indicate this change in setting (fig. 39). Bailey visualised both homes as occupying the same space, using the same furniture, with no division between the two. Despite the O'Connor's caravan likely to have been smaller than the Thompsons' house, the scale of the two interiors was shown to be identical. The caravan was implied by a detached wheel, partially submerged into the floor just off-stage centre visible in fig. 37. In a similar manner to the depleted spools and girders of *Paradise Bound*, the wheel was used as a workable piece of stage furniture, with actors sitting on it as an extra seat. Bailey bordered the Thompsons and O'Connor's interiors with a white framework on three sides,

¹⁰⁶ Production Photographs *The Way Home*, [Compact Disc], Photographer: Stephen Vaughan, 2006, EVT Reference, EVT/AV/000090

emphasising the theatre's thrust configuration. Fig. 37 shows how this outlined each living-room with a series of rectangular empty frames in varying dimensions that could simultaneously suggest windows, shelving, picture frames or the structure of the caravan. Though fig. 38 shows a ladder extended to the top of the framework, it does not appear that this was used to access an upper level as an additional playing space.¹⁰⁷

Bailey's dual use of space visually suggested that the families had more in common than they supposed, and that their prejudice towards each other was unfounded. This theatrical device of one space being used as two locations was a relatively simple scenographic method that represented a dissolving of the borders between the families' differing worlds. This may have been a specific commentary on Scouse identity, namely that no definite line could be drawn around who it encompassed. However, as I shall explore in 4.5, this scenographic representation of the families' commonality could also be seen as an oversimplification of Liverpool's multifaceted identities, as it placed Daniel's Traveller identity in a hierarchy below his Scouse one. I will also discuss in 4.61 how reviewers appear to have found the symbolism in Bailey's design, and the significance this has in terms of wider readings of Scouse identity, difficult to comprehend.

Figs. 37 and 38 shows that the black brick wall of the theatre was exposed behind the white framework, but was partially covered by a second, rust-coloured, scenic "brick wall" topped with barbed wire. The two "walls", one real, a part of the theatre's architecture, and one added by Bailey, appeared, apart from their colour, very similar. When Bailey's wall was not directly lit, as can be seen in fig. 37, it became indistinguishable from The Everyman's actual wall. The wall as a fortified boundary was similar to the device of the fence that Bailey would later use in *Paradise Bound* in creating a clear boundary between the domestic interior and what lay beyond it. The additional fortifications on top of the wall had a violence in their potential to harm anyone trying to scale the wall, either to gain access or to escape. This design was ambiguous as to whether the Thompson family and the Traveller community were trying to protect themselves from outside dangers or had been contained and shut off from the rest of the city. In 4.5 I will discuss how this design could be seen as symbolic of the frequent anxiety expressed with regard to Liverpool's

¹⁰⁷ It is more likely that the ladder was used for Scene 11 where Paul comes across Felix clearing a gutter (Moss 2006: 61).

local-ness and insularity; as something to be simultaneously protected and preserved, but that was also restrictive in its being overly inward looking.



Fig. 39. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), Scene 10, Daniel and Bobby (Eamonn Owens), (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 40. Production photo for *The Way Home* 2006), Scene 4, Ang (Leanne Best) and Paul (Nick Moss), (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 41. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), Scene 3, L to R: Daniel, Ellie (Amy McAllister) and Margaret (Claire Cogan) (Vaughan 2006)

The families' domestic space, contained within the framework, was delineated into two areas shown by differences in the floor surface. The division between the O'Connor and Thompson's living-room spaces and kitchens was indicated by a change in direction of the floorboards visible in fig. 37. It appears from the production photographs that, by its pale colour and flatness, this floor was imitation wood-effect vinyl rather than solid wood, which would typically be thought of as more expensive.¹⁰⁸ Downstage left, just outside of the framework, the floor surface undertook a more dramatic change to a textured, dusty grey surface similar to gravel that indicated an outside area along with a red metal work bench (fig. 39). The two downstage areas met just off centre to create a triangular point and a clear line of perspective for the audience that led their gaze to a central focal point. This configuration drew the eye to the centre downstage, a point where the sightlines of *The Everyman* (when used in its thrust arrangement) are particularly strong. This added extra weight and significance to action that occurred within this area.

The kitchen and living room spaces were further demarcated by their detailed set dressing and props. The living-room sofa was wrapped in plastic (see fig. 41), signifying its value by the families' efforts to protect it and keep it clean. The shrink-wrapped sofa coupled with the tidiness of the shelves surrounding it and the table with its arranged fruit bowl atop a lace placemat suggested that the living room was a more formal space than that of the kitchen. Fig. 40 shows the kitchen surfaces and cupboards cluttered with cooking utensils and cleaning products. Though these are expected objects to find in a kitchen, the sheer abundance (especially of cleaning products), as tools of domestic labour (cooking, cleaning) may have been used to underscore the pronounced gender roles present in the play, with the women expected to care for the men. Bailey also used costumes to emphasise the gender binaries in the two communities. Ang's costumes included casual trousers and shirts in neutral colours (fig. 40) as well as a glamorous black dress with full make-up (fig. 62). In 4.4 I relate how the costumes reflected how the character of Ang struggled with her role as a care-giving Scouse "Mam", asserting her autonomy through her more daring, going-out dress. In contrast, Margaret's' unchanging drab, shapeless jumpers and skirts matched her drudge status within the family dynamic.

¹⁰⁸ Murchison used this for the affluent Hope Street house in *3 Sisters on Hope Street*.

This model for how the families were supposed to function through gender normative roles was further emphasised by the family photographs in the living room, which are notable for their quantity. As I will show in 4.4 through examination of similar, prominent displays in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place*, such abundance and careful positioning of the family photographs emphasised the families' connection and respect for preceding generations. The photographs could be seen as a visual demonstration of an established lineage. Photographs of the families' ancestors showed that they had a history through which they could trace their relationship to "here". Although, in the case of the O'Connor's, it was assumed throughout the narrative that this heritage was primarily a Traveller ancestry rather than a Scouse one.

Bailey showed that there was a tension between the O'Connor's Scouse and Traveller identities in his costuming of Daniel. The character of Daniel was performed by Owens as having an Irish accent. This voice saw the character constantly having to defend his status as being from 'Here..., Liverpool' (Moss 2006: 22). Bailey visualised this by having Daniel wear a Liverpool FC football shirt throughout (fig. 41) despite Moss specifying the costume as a Manchester United team shirt in *The Way Home's* stage directions (ibid, p.3). Bailey also used a football shirt as an instantly recognisable symbol of identity in *Paradise Bound* with Anthony wearing an England shirt throughout. Like Anthony, Daniels' football shirt stood for his Scouse identity as working-class male through his obvious devotion to his local team. The decision to show the Thompson and O'Connor families as occupying identical homes was also a political one for it presented the Scouse and Traveller as impossible to tell apart, and implied that their experience of the city was the same. In 4.4 I will elaborate as to why this presentation is problematic by examining how Bailey's design potentially erased the families' differences. I will show that *The Way Home's* scenography homogenized Scouse identities and experiences of the city in a comparable manner to the designs of *3 Sisters in Hope Street* and *Hope Place*.

4.2 Design of *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008)

3 Sisters on Hope Street was the first Made in Liverpool production of 2008 (25 January), co-produced with Hampstead Theatre, and was intended as 'the opening fanfare' of the Capital of Culture celebratory programme (Bodinetz & Aydon in Samuels and Oberman 2008: XVII). The production was directed by Lindsay Posner and designed by Murchison,

whose 2016 interview is used to substantiate the observations made here. *3 Sisters on Hope Street*'s narrative loosely follows that of its model, Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (first staged in 1901), in which three sisters and their brother, feeling displaced in a small-town, long to return to the cosmopolitan capital of their childhood. In *3 Sisters on Hope Street*, this sense of longing is transposed to a Jewish family living in Liverpool a year after the end of Second World War (1946). The play's characters' Jewish identity was central to the production and was capitalised on by the theatres' marketing department, which targeted Liverpool's Jewish communities through direct correspondence, encouraging them to visit the production.¹⁰⁹ Samuels commented in *The Jewish Quarterly* that the Liverpool-ness of the play was a solution to the piece needing to be set 'somewhere provincial' rather than having been integral to its conception (Samuels 2007). The play's setting, within the family's home on Hope Street, however, had significance as the street name evoked the family's hope of moving on to somewhere better than Liverpool.

Samuels and Oberman used the tension between the characters' Jewish and Liverpool identities and experiences, aligning their Jewish heritage with New York and Palestine, to re-frame Chekhov's notions of home and homelands. The Prozorov siblings (Olga, Masha and Irina and their brother Andrei) of the original become the Laskys: Rita (Samantha Robinson), May (Suzan Sylvester), Gertie (Anna Francolini) and Arnold (Ben Caplan) who long for New York, rather than Moscow. Their lives gain some diversion by the arrival of soldiers, specified in Samuels and Oberman's version to be American GIs. Other notable changes include Rita's (the youngest sister) suitor becoming an American air-force clerk (rather than a baron) who plans for them to start a new life in Palestine. Arnolds' initially naïve, local girlfriend and later manipulative wife (Chekhov's Natasha) was personified by the character of Debbie (Daisy Lewis), a Liverpool-born Jewish woman and daughter of the local kosher butcher.

Murchison's set reflected the play's sense of intangible homesickness, tailored from Chekhov's original to fit the Liverpool context. In his interview, Murchison (2016) reflected on how he had clashed with Posner and Bodinetz over his wanting a '.... more naturalistic style' (Murchison 2016) that would link scenic elements and costumes to the characters'

¹⁰⁹ Cover letters promoting *3 Sisters on Hope Street* to the Jewish community [Printed Material], 2008, EVT Reference, EVT/PR/000483

feelings and personalities. The director and artistic director, however, were insistent that the set show a period accurate 1940s Liverpool home. The material available that depicts or discusses the scenography (including Murchison's own comments) point to Murchison having combined his desired 'naturalistic style' (ibid) with a realism evidenced by the design's functionality, detail and period accuracy.¹¹⁰ In his chapter on 'The Scenography of Chekhov' in *Looking into the Abyss* (2011), Arnold Aronson refers to such scenography that appears realistic but incorporates more symbolic elements as 'Chekhovian naturalism'. Aronson details how Chekhovian naturalism aims to be reflective of the characters' emotional state rather than 'a documentary recording of domestic décor', but that this has been frequently discounted in the reception and descriptions of such scenography as 'painstakingly detailed' (Aronson 2011: 118). Murchison's design had elements of 'detailed' (ibid) realism, but also of a selective naturalism. Although the 'Lasky' home was presented and received by many reviewers (4.6) as an accurate representation of a Hope Street house in the late 1940s, in many ways it was not. Where the design deviated it can be concluded that Murchison was prioritising the scenography being symbolic of the family's identity and relationships above its accuracy.

Murchison's design presented the middle-class Hope Street house within a box set that does not appear, from the available production photographs (Glendinning 2008),¹¹¹ to have used the full thrust of The Everyman space. When asked in his interview Murchison (2016) could not recall exactly how the stage was organised, however, it appears from the production photos that the audience viewed the house's ground floor interior through a missing fourth wall (fig. 42). The house's interior was divided into living-room and dining-

¹¹⁰ Realism and naturalism are slippery terms that are often used interchangeably within informal discussion on theatre, and as I will demonstrate in 4.6, theatre criticism. Naturalism within theatre discourse is associated with a 19th-century model of drama where the narrative is determined by a character's psyche and events on stage strive for scientific truth. Examples include works by August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen. Naturalism, however, is also used to describe theatre that includes symbolic elements, acknowledging that the events and setting have been constructed. Realism is often confused with naturalism as discussed by Stephen Lacey (1995) in his writing on new wave British realist theatre. Lacey refers to realism's 'problems of definition' (Lacey 1995: 63) and its being frequently used in way that is 'virtually synonymous' with naturalism (ibid, 99) in his writing on new wave British realist theatre. In this thesis, it can be assumed that the way that Murchison uses the terms naturalism and/or naturalistic, is to refer to scenography with symbolic elements. See: Stynan (1981) pp.1-9) and Lacey (1995) pp. 63–70, 99–103.

¹¹¹ Production Photographs *3 Sisters on Hope Street*, [Compact Disc], Photographer: Hugo Glendinning, 2008, EVT Reference, EVT/AV/000127

room spaces, delineated by a change in level, the dining room being a single step up. An intruding cut through wall indicated the rooms were separate but flowed into each other. This configuration reflected Chekhov's original stage directions which require the two spaces to be visible throughout the first act.¹¹² Murchison admitted that he had never been in an actual Hope Street house and a comparison of *3 Sisters on Hope Street*'s large living and dining room with those narrow interiors in *Hope Place* reveals inconsistencies. The basis for *3 Sisters on Hope Street*'s relatively large and high-ceilinged rooms came instead from Murchison's knowledge of similar grey Georgian houses in cities such as Bristol (Murchison 2016).

3 Sisters on Hope Street was structured as a play in four Acts mirroring Chekhov's original. However, unlike in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*,¹¹³ these Acts all took place within the living and dining rooms of the family house. The stage directions of *3 Sisters on Hope Street* call for a change in perspective, with the set required to '...to turn on its axis' during the interval at the end of Act 2 (Samuels and Oberman 2008: 8). The production photographs show that this 'turn' (ibid) was achieved by certain items on stage, including the piano, being re-positioned and/or reversed (fig. 43). During this transformation, the stage left wall of the house was also extended.¹¹⁴ This can be seen as having occurred between fig. 42 and fig. 43. This 'turning' of the set, according to the published stage directions (ibid), was intended to change the view from the house. In Act 1 and 2, the windows look out onto Hope Street, and in Act 2 and 3, they look out onto the garden (ibid). Aronson (2011) discusses the fusion of interior and exterior motifs in Chekhov as being symbolic of the longing for elsewhere. Specifically, in *Three Sisters*, the garden setting of Act 4 stretches into the distance towards '...the promised land that the sisters can never reach' (Aronson 2011: 120). Yet, the 'Lasky' sisters in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* are never shown outside of the house and the view(s) from their windows were obscured with gauzy white curtains (see fig.42). This confined the characters to their home, and kept the gaze of the audience firmly inside the Hope Street house.

¹¹² Chekhov's original setting descriptions are translated by Peter Carson as 'A drawing room with columns, beyond which a large reception hall is visible' (Chekhov 2002: 203).

¹¹³ In *Three Sisters*, Act 3 takes place in Olga and Irina's bedrooms and Act 4 in the garden surrounding the family house.

¹¹⁴ The photographs that show this extension (figs. 41 and 42) further evidence that Murchison's set did not utilise the full thrust stage of The Everyman as this extension would have restricted sightlines and audience capacity.



Fig. 42. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 1, L to R: Gertie (Anna Francolini), Vince (Finbar Lynch), Rita (Samantha Robinson), Nate (Phillip Voss), May (Suzan Sylvester), Tush (Russell Bentley) and Arnold (Ben Caplan) (Glendinning 2008)



Fig. 43. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 3, L to R: Gertie, Vince, May, Tush and Solly (Gerard Monaco) (Glendinning 2008)



Fig. 44. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 1, May and Rita (Glendinning 2008)



Fig. 45. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 4, Rita and Debbie (Daisy Lewis) (Glendinning 2008)



Fig. 46. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 1, L to R: Gertie, Rita and May (Glendinning 2008)

Murchison made the space claustrophobic through the multitude of ornaments and furniture that crowded the space, adorned with fussy details such as lace antimacassars and fake flowers (fig. 45). The production photographs show that Peter Mumford's lighting design was in keeping with this detailed realism and presented the home as fully functional despite its busy decor. Mumford employed warm and cold washes in order to represent different times of day and several practical lighting effects such as the shaded standard lamp (fig. 44), rather than using the lighting in a purposefully unnatural way to heighten the mood (as was in the case of the musicals I discussed in Chapter 3, Part 2). Murchison dressed the room with glossy, dark wood furniture including the large piano, echoing the floorboards similar mahogany hue. The dark woods against the green and floral wallpaper (the flower pattern repeated in the sofa and rug) gave the space a subdued drabness and formality. The set dressing included a collection of sepia, silver-framed family photographs on top of the piano (fig. 44), the display of previous generations similar to that seen in *The Way Home*.

Chekhov's original instructions are very specific as to the three sisters' costumes being white for the youngest, black for the middle sister and dark blue for the eldest (see Chekhov

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2002: 203). Murchison chose to reflect the symbolism of these costumes (an example of Chekhovian selective naturalism) but without utilising Chekhov's precise specifications. In Act 1 (fig. 46) Murchison costumed eldest sister Gertie (left) conservatively, indicating her role as the spinster teacher. The youngest sister, Rita (centre) was dressed in a feminine, full skirted floral dress with loose hair, whilst the worldlier middle sister May (right) wore a more glamorous, fitted green dress with red lipstick and jewellery. The sisters had several costume changes that reflected their character development. Some of these reflected Chekhov's original (Chekhov 2002: 239) including Rita's more structured dress in Act 3 (fig. 47) that she wears to her new job. Others were symbolic additions made by Murchison such as the colours of May's costumes changing from green in Act 1 to blue in Act 3 (fig. 48) and 4 (fig. 49), after she falls in love with Vince. Murchison also used costume to differentiate Debbie, whose Chekhovian counterpart Natasha is repeatedly admonished for her poor dress sense, from the refinement of the 'Lasky' sisters. This can be seen in how the elaborate graphic print suit Debbie (right) wears in Act 4 (fig. 45), contrasts with Rita's (left) muted ensemble.



Fig. 47. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), [Cropped Detail] Act 3, Rita (Glendinning 2008)



Fig. 48. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 3, May (Glendinning 2008)



Fig. 49. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 3, May (Glendinning 2008)

Although the marketing and script stressed the production as being representative of Liverpool's Jewish community, nothing within the design definitively located the house as being in the city. Multiple Liverpool landmarks are referenced by the play's protagonists, including a veritable listing of all the city's Jewish sites from synagogues to favourite restaurants (Samuels and Oberman 2008: 44). Characters stress the city as their "home", in both an everyday and more spiritual sense, with Mordy (Elliot Levey), the Liverpool-born husband of May equating it to Palestine (ibid, p.33).¹¹⁵ Yet, Liverpool and the establishments which are enshrined in the dialogue as touchstones of a Liverpool-Jewish identity, exist entirely offstage. Though Mordy, and Debbie express pride in their Liverpool-Jewish identities, the 'Lasky' siblings consider themselves different from, and more refined than the city's inhabitants. This is shown by their initial snobbery towards Debbies' dress sense, mirroring the disdain Natasha encounters in Chekhov's original for her perceived lack of sophistication (ibid, p.38). The siblings' uncle 'Nate Weinberg' (Philip Voss) is fiercely defensive of his place in the city as a Liverpool Jew, even in the face of anti-Semitic violence and locals breaking the windows of Jewish shops (ibid, p. 88).¹¹⁶ He links this sense of belonging to '...my house. The one I grew up in. The one that my Daddy's daddy built... Our beautiful house on Hope Street.' (ibid, p. 89). I shall examine in 4.4 this apparent contradiction where Liverpool-Jewish identity and its landmarks were explicitly referred to throughout the dialogue and action of the play yet was almost entirely absent from the scenography.

4.3 Design of *Hope Place* (2014)

Hope Place opened on the 9 May 2014, directed by Rachel Kavanaugh and with McKintosh's design sharing many of the scenographic motifs that I observed in *3 Sisters on Hope Street*. Wynne's play entwined the family history and relationships of adult siblings with the history of their house on Hope Street. The narrative follows a group of brothers and sisters gathering in their childhood home for their mother's funeral and to debate whether

¹¹⁵ Mordy quips that when he was told 'more than once' to go to Palestine, 'the homeland', he replied that that the furthest he intended to go was '...Salford for my cousin Betty's birthday tea' (Samuels and Oberman 2008:83).

¹¹⁶ The anti-Semitic violence featured in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* refers to the real anti-Jewish riots of 1947 following the Sergeants' affair, where two British Army Intelligence Corps NCOs, Sergeant Clifford Martin and Sergeant Mervyn Paice were kidnapped and murdered by Zionist groups in Palestine.

it is necessary to sell the house. The play includes flashback scenes to the house's past and the history of what is now the site of The Everyman. Wynne is known for nostalgic dramas about Liverpool, having previously written *The Knocky* about a Birkenhead council estate, performed at The Everyman in 1997.¹¹⁷ The siblings were played by famous local actors: Maggie (Eileen O'Brien), Eric (Neil Caple), Jack (Joe McGann) and Veronica (Tricia Kelly). The cast also contained Veronica's daughter Josie (Emma Lisi) and her new 'posh' (Wynne 2014: 21) boyfriend Simon (Ciaran Kellgren) as well as various walk on characters featured in the flashbacks played by Michelle Butterfly and Alan Stocks. The commissioning of *Hope Place* as the first Made in Liverpool production after the re-opening of The Everyman in March 2014, with its exact setting, familiar narrative, well-known Liverpool author and famous local actors, demonstrates how the artistic directors considered these crucial factors.¹¹⁸

At the time of writing, The Everyman archive contained no material relating to *Hope Place*. I was able to obtain production photographs directly from their photographer Jonathan Keenan. However, the images are still comparatively limited compared to the majority of case studies presented in this thesis, and I have used my personal observation of the play (14 May 2014) to clarify *Hope Place's* scenographic composition. McKintosh's set consisted of a white building constructed over two levels, centrally placed within The Everyman's thrust stage, the rest of the space appearing unoccupied when in blackout. This gave the structure a sense of being isolated but an audience with knowledge of Hope Street may have seen the space on either side of the house differently. The narrowness of McKintosh's structure and the gaps either side indicated it was one of many other, suggested by their absence, terraced houses in a row which mirrored the architecture of the real-life Hope Street.

This design also gave the drama a "slice of life" feel, as if the house had been cut out of the street and its fourth wall removed allowing the audience to see within. The structure was able to revolve, one aspect showing the "street" view with the house's front door visible as if

¹¹⁷ *The Knocky* was originally performed at the Royal Court London's Young Writer's Festival in 1995.

¹¹⁸ In 2016, Wynne was commissioned to write Christmas show *The Star* for the Playhouse about its past incarnation as The Star Music Hall (1866 – 1896), demonstrating the continued popularity for such nostalgic productions.

seen from the outside. The other aspect revealed the house's interior with a small platform directly behind the door with space for one or two actors to stand on. Stairs, which can be seen in fig. 50, led down from this platform and elevated front door to a kitchen area, apparently in the basement of the house. A hall/corridor space could just be seen beyond the kitchen through an adjoining door upstage left. As the audience took their seats (prior to the play's beginning and at the start and finish of the interval) a grid-map of Liverpool was projected over the house including into the empty black space surrounding it. The projection left no doubt in the audience's mind as to the precise location of the house, putting it quite literally on the map. This covering over of the stage with the lines of the map, positioning the house on it, communicated to the audience that this house and the events occurring within its walls happened "right here".



Fig. 50. Production photo from *Hope Place* (2014). Act 1, Scene 1, L to R: Eric (Neil Caple), Jack (Joe McGann), Simon (Ciaran Kellgren), Maggie (Eileen O'Brien), Josie (Emma Lisi) and Veronica (Tricia Kelly), The family house, present day, (Keenan 2014)



Fig. 51. Production photo from *Hope Place* (2014). Act 1, Scene 3, Simon and Maggie (Eileen O'Brien), The family house, present day, (Keenan 2014)

The kitchen area where the majority of the play's action took place, pulled focus into a relatively small, central section of The Everyman's overall stage space. As in *The Way Home*, the kitchen was fully equipped, the cupboards and surfaces filled with food, cleaning and culinary equipment. Appliances were functional and included a working kettle and a sink with running water. The family congregated around the kitchen table which appeared to be 1970s in style with mismatching wooden chairs (fig. 50), suggesting that it had been there for a long time, a practical rather than aesthetic choice by the house's inhabitants. This centred all action within the domestic space, continuing the trend I observed, and will discuss further in 4.4, in *The Way Home* and *3 Sisters on Hope Street* of viewing the characters' stories and relationships within the framework of their Liverpool homes. McKintosh's design choices implied that the family has inhabited the house for some time and that their identities were intrinsically linked to it, and consequently to Liverpool.

This family's status as longstanding Liverpool residents was also shown by the visualisation of the family's history. Firstly, this had a tangible presence with the walls of the kitchen

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becoming increasingly covered in Post-it notes, photographs and diagrams as they undertook research under the guidance of Simon (fig. 51). Unlike the photographic displays in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* or *The Way Home*, the past generations were not presented to be venerated but rather to shed light on the family's present. These layered snapshots of generations demonstrate the importance of the family having a lineage that connects directly to a shared history with the city. The photographs can be seen in fig. 51, tacked to a doorframe that served to mark the entrance to the kitchen without an actual wall blocking the audience from being able to see into the adjoining hall space. In this photograph, Simon is showing Maggie print-outs of what he has found out about the house. With the evidence of those who had gone before them haphazardly collaged in a manner that called to mind an incident board in a detective drama, the family's Liverpool history was visualised as legitimate research, worthy of academic enquiry. The family's roots could be physically mapped back through the generations.



Fig. 52. Production photo from *Hope Place* (2014). Act 1, Prologue, Farmer (Alan Stocks) and Girl, The site of The Everyman, 1699, (Keenan 2014)



Fig. 53. Production photo from *Hope Place* (2014). Act 1, Scene 2, Mr Maguire (Alan Stocks) & Sarah (Michelle Butterfly), The site of The Everyman (Hope Hall), 1838, (Keenan 2014)



Fig. 54. Production photo from *Hope Place* (2014). Act 2, Scene 1, Lily Lloyd (Michelle Butterfly), The site of The Everyman, (Hope Hall), 1892, (Keenan 2014)



Fig. 55. Production photo from *Hope Place* (2014). Act 1, Scene 3, Young Jack, Maggie, Eric & Veronica, The family house, present day, (Keenan 2014)



Fig. 56. Production photo from *Hope Place* (2014). Act 1, Scene 3, L to R: Eric, Maggie Jack and Veronica, The family house, present day, (Keenan 2014)

This shared history, that of the family interwoven with that of the city, also had a ghostly aspect in its visualisation through flashbacks. Characters of the past in period costume moved through the contemporary set, unseen by its 2014 inhabitants. This can be seen in fig. 55 where the siblings' childhood selves appeared in the modern kitchen, apparently invisible to their adult selves.¹¹⁹ Their spectral quality was highlighted by Tim Lutkin's lighting design, with cold washes and subtle fog (fig. 53) giving the space and actors an ethereal appearance. The visual and temporal layering further entrenched the family as connected to the space, with them and their past selves inhabiting the same locale across time. This built on the mapping of the family's history, with printouts and diagrams of

¹¹⁹ I have not included the names of the child-actors in image captions as there were two cast for each part and I have not been able to ascertain which ones appear in the photograph, or in the production that I saw. The actors were Young Veronica (Freya Barnes/Julia Carlile), Young Maggie (Kaitlyn Hogg/Rumah Norton), Young Eric (Frank Turpin/George Turpin) and Young Jack (Harry Turpin/Sam Vaughan).

family trees pasted over the walls (fig. 50), producing a sense of Scouse kinship and identity, as a continuous thread – passed down through generations.

Aside from the appearances of the siblings' younger selves, the flashback scenes shifted the exact location, from the site of the family's house to The Everyman itself. In the opening scene shown in fig. 52, a Farmer and Girl appeared on the second storey of the house structure, turned to its exterior face, and unfurled a handwritten banner. This was reiterated by a projection, which can be seen in fig. 52, reading: 'Here 1699'. The Farmer (Alan Stocks) and Girl (Michelle Butterfly) in dark period costumes, discussed how their 'Here', in 1699, was 'Fields and fields and fields' (Wynne 2014: 13). They directed their gaze onto the audience, who were positioned as being in these 'fields' (ibid) that would have once covered the auditorium. Another flashback at the top of Act 2, featured the character of Lily Lloyd (Michelle Butterfly) singing famous musical hall songs with northern themes. These included *Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?* and *She's a Lassie from Lancashire* (fig. 54). This scene was indicated by projected text as also occurring 'Here' (on the site of The Everyman) in 1892. When I observed the production, audience members spontaneously joined in with songs, suggesting that they felt included and that the plays' depiction of local history had resonance for them.

The 'Here' signs that featured in these scenes had particular significance within the play's production at The Everyman. The locating of these scenes by the use of signs reading 'Here' is detailed in the script (Wynne 2014: 31, 56, 78, 90), with the consequence that these scenes would be unworkable in any other theatre. Each short scene included further costumed characters from the past with projected text, and/or hand-held signs giving the year and the location. These included flashbacks to the site of The Everyman as having once been, Hope Hall – an evangelist meeting centre in 1838 (Act 1, Scene 2) (fig. 53), Hope Street Picture House in 1955 (Act 1, Scene 6) and a Temperance Hall in 1962 (Act 2, Scene 7). McKintosh's simple device of overlaying the contemporary design with text, maps and actors in historic costume emphasised the link between The Everyman ('Here') as it was "now" (2014) to these manifestations of its past.

McKintosh's design reinforced *Hope Place* as a tribute to Liverpool history whilst also demonstrating an awareness as to how such self-celebration by the city has been viewed by outsiders. Made in Liverpool productions often include moments of ironic self-parody. For

instance, the aforementioned visual humour that played on Scouse stereotypes in the queue scene of *Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi* (3.15). In *Hope Place*, Wynne's narrative played with how Liverpool has been considered and marketed, by one of the characters appearing in a Sergeant Pepper suit (fig. 56) for his work as an unofficial Liverpool tour guide.¹²⁰ The embellished tours were played for humour with the admission that much of Jack's material was pure fabrication, a collection of Scouse tall stories. Jack presents a false narrative of 'the actual house I grew up in', telling a group of offstage tourists that 'Me and Ringo Starr used to sit on this doorstep and have a sing-song' (Wynne 2014:39). Jack's outfit, coupled with the fact he was played by Joe McGann, a famous Liverpool actor, took possession of the jokes often levelled at Liverpool's obsession with The Beatles. His garish costume heightened the theatricality within the already theatricalised context of McKintosh's set.

The tension between the lived experience of the city and how it is perceived was presented through Jack's exaggerated tours as well as through the character of Simon, a research student doing a PhD in local history. Though the family eventually warm to his research, they initially distrust it, finding Simon's academic and detached analysis of their home suspicious and strange. The character describes the family's house in literary language, calling it Dickensian and 'like a postcard', positioning himself as an outsider to those for whom it is simply home (Wynne 2014: 22). Jack, visualised as possessing an exuberant, performative Scouse identity through his voice, mannerisms and costume-within-a costume was set against the understated, conservatively dressed Simon, whose Scouse-ness the former questions on account of his lack of accent (ibid, p.24). The two characters represented opposing perspectives on how to tell Liverpool's stories. Jack embodied Scouse identity as mythic and exaggerated in its proud grandiosity whilst Simon attempted to legitimise it by breaking it down into quantifiable facts.

These contrasting approaches to the representation of Scouse-ness; one performative, one scholarly, against a background of Hope Street's history and present-day lived experience, allowed *Hope Place* to cover a great deal of ground in its visualisation of Liverpool identity. The production functioned as form of time-travel experience for the audience, attempting to transport them back along the building's timeline from their recently refurbished

¹²⁰ A Sergeant Pepper suit is a brightly coloured, stylised army uniform, a replica of the ones designed by Noel Howard and worn by The Beatles on the cover of their 1967 album: *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

auditorium seats. McKintosh's scenography served to constantly remind them that what they were watching had "happened right here", even if that "here" was located in the distant past. Visually depicting events as inextricably linked to "here" may contribute to limited conceptualisations of the city and of Scouse-ness. In 4.5, I will explore how by overly stressing images of the city – "here" – as "home", scenography risks presenting Liverpool as being inherently nostalgic for a "lost" homogenous Scouse community that never truly was.

4.4 Realistic homes, idealised homelands

These "it happened right here" case studies utilised realistic domestic interiors with detailed set dressing and functional elements such as running water in the kitchen sinks. Realism was intersected with symbolic elements, both scenographic – *The Way Home*'s detached caravan wheels, *Hope Place*'s floating door frame, and dramatic – the spectres of *Hope Place*'s past traversing the contemporary set. The audience was confronted with familiar Liverpool homes, their designs drawn from real locations, disrupted by impossible visual contradictions such as a wheel in the middle of the floor or a 19th-century music hall singer in a modern kitchen.

This scenographic approach was similar to that which I observed in the case studies of Chapter 3, Part 1. In *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* (2007) realistic and symbolic design elements were layered in order to show alternative perspectives on local issues (3.5). In the productions considered in this chapter, the symbolic design emphasised the events as being from "here" and rooted in the city's history. This is comparable to the designs of the musicals examined in Chapter 3, Part 2, where the visualisation of local landmarks presented a nostalgic take on Liverpool's past. Although the case studies examined here also played on nostalgia, they differed significantly in their depiction of Liverpool homes. Gaston Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space* (1994) that people's homes act as the touchstone by which they understand other spaces through comparison. Bachelard describes how the inhabitants of a house imprint it with both with their own memories and those which they attribute to the imagined experiences of previous occupants. Houses, as with 'indeed any space that people inhabit', bear 'the essence of the notion of home' (Bachelard 1994: 129). In *The Way Home*, *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place* the scenography was used to create homes intended to be familiar to local audiences, but also

showed how the characters felt about where they lived and those who had lived there before them.

In *The Way Home*'s otherwise realistic design, Bailey presented the two sets of characters with their distinct cultural, social and economic differences, as inhabiting the same interior within the same subdivision of stage space. This implied that they inhabited the same boundary of identity; sharing a Liverpool "home", and therefore a shared set of values that equalled a form of Scouse identity. Though this was likely intended as a positive depiction, showing that the O'Connor's and Thompson's prejudice against each other was unfounded, it also largely ignored the multiplicity of the characters' identities. In showing that there was no real distinction to be made between the two forms of Scouse identity, the scenography of *The Way Home* erased the Traveller identity of the O'Connor's' almost entirely. By absorbing one Liverpool home into another so as to be indistinguishable, Bailey perpetuated an essentialist notion of a singular Scouse identity, homogenous and without diversity. Despite *The Way Home*'s narrative exploring the tension between the 'O'Connor's' and the 'Thompson's, and the ways that they defined themselves and each other in a relatively nuanced manner, the audience was presented with a scenography that showed the two families' homes as identical. This inferred that the characters' cultural and social identities were also interchangeable, the symbolic elements of Bailey's set placing both within one conception of a Liverpool home.

In his interview, Murchison (2016) repeatedly referred to wanting to represent the characters' emotional states in *3 Sisters on Hope Street*'s design whilst Posner and Bodinetz's were adamant that the focus be on period accuracy. This apparent conflict in the conception of the design can be seen in the final visualisation of the Hope Street house having fastidiously accurate set dressing but no clear location. Murchison's set confined the Lasky siblings to their interior, with no views from the windows to the outside or visual references to the city beyond. This manifested the characters' Chekhovian longing for escape but also resulted in Liverpool being absent from the scenography. The city was reduced to a place to be escaped from. What the audience saw enforced how Samuels and Oberman's narrative depicted the family's Jewish and Liverpool identities within a hierarchy, with their Scouse-ness something they wanted to leave behind.

In contrast, the family house in *Hope Place* was the foundation upon which the characters built their Scouse identity, and this was shown by McKintosh's combination of realistic and symbolic design elements. Wynne's narrative tied the family's personal and wider memories of the city to the physical space created by McKintosh, with the past inhabitants of the Hope Street house and The Everyman theatre site moving through the set unseen by the contemporaneous characters. McKintosh's scenography presented Liverpool's past as haunting its present through historical costumes, flashes of handwritten/projected dates, and dry ice being layered over his design of a realistic, contemporary Hope street house. This house was located as unquestionably "here" by a map of the city being projected over the stage. Some flashback scenes took place within this house (Act 1, Scene 3) but the majority were located on the site of The Everyman. McKintosh's scenography framed the fictional house and The Everyman as conduits through which Liverpool identities past and present were able to flow through. What the audience saw added another layer of meaning to the drama as the figures of the past haunted The Everyman stage theatricalised by McKintosh's set, and the actual auditorium through the references to the theatre's history

4.4.1 A family home: a homogenous Liverpool

The domestic sets of the "it happened right here" case studies can be considered as having presented wider commentaries on the plays' sense of home. The plays' characters' interaction with these spaces and with each other within them is revelatory as to how their Liverpool identities and experiences of the city were presented. In *3 Sisters on Hope Street*, the character of Nate (the 'Lasky' siblings' maternal uncle) explains that the Hope Street house has an imagined significance, based on its heritage as passed down through his family. Though I reiterate that *3 Sisters on Hope Street* focuses on the Lasky's Jewish identity, Nate does express a connection to the city.

...In fact, there isn't even a street or a house at all. And ...there is no such place as Liverpool. Have you ever seen a real liver bird? Pull the other one. We are all figments of each other's imaginations. (Samuels and Oberman 2008: 82)

Nate implies that Liverpool in its entirety is a make-believe concept, and that adhering to any such identity is a nothing more than a self-made fiction. Though this speech was clearly intended as sarcastic, it demonstrates a knowing-ness on behalf of the characters as to how their identities have been constructed. In all of the plays' narratives the families

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were shown as coming together against those seen as outsiders, the Travelling community in *The Way Home* and Simon in *Hope Place*. This was representative of a united Liverpool, secure in its sense of who does and who doesn't belong. The staging of meals is used to show the characters' relationships, their fractures and disagreements as well as their intimacy. Through inviting those once positioned as outsiders to eat with them, for instance, Bobby sitting with the 'O'Connor family (fig. 58), the families indicated that they were now included in their kin.

This family kinship can be seen as symbolic of the broader connection thought to exist between Scouse identities. Audiences were shown how the characters had constructed an identity and heritage for themselves that was reliant on what and who had gone before through family photographs, ghosts and the mapping of the past onto the present. The established families were shown as adhering to strongly defined gender roles as associated with the customary conceptions of Scouse identity. The manner in which the families of *The Way Home* and *Hope Place* were depicted was typical of how "traditional" Scouse families have been habitually visualised and have come to stand for an imagined homogenous wider kinship of Scouse, imagined as once having populated the city prior to globalisation and multiculturalism.



Fig. 57. Production photo for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008), Act 1, Ritas' birthday tea, (Glendinning 2008)



Fig. 58. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), Scene 5, L to R: Bobby, Ellie, Margaret, Felix and Daniel (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 59. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), [Cropped Detail] Daniel (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 60. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), [Cropped Detail] Paul (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 61. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), Scene 4, Bobby & Paul (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 62. Production photo for *The Way Home* (2006), Scene 2, Ang (Vaughan 2006)

In *The Way Home* and, to a lesser extent, *Hope Place*, the threat of the family fracturing was key to the productions' plot. Though this was also present within *3 Sisters on Hope Street*, it is more indicative of the play's Chekhovian source material than a commentary on Scouse identity. Matriarchal characters in *The Way Home* and *Hope Place* ("Mams") were charged with holding the home and by inference, the family together. This could be seen in their interaction with the functioning set, for example Maggie in *Hope Place* (the last sister to still live in the siblings' childhood house) constantly washing up with the operational sink and providing food and drink from the apparently working fridge and kettle. In *The Way Home* this care-giver role was bestowed upon the Traveller women whose apparent duty to keep the caravan spotless was illustrated by the set's multitude of cleaning products and shrink-wrapped sofa. With the male characters and the houses shown as thus looked after by the women, the theatricalised homes served as microcosms of Scouse family life founded on outdated, patriarchal values and gender roles.

The brothers of *Hope Place* were also shown as tended to by their sisters, yet their costumes, did not particularly show them as stereotypically Scouse macho "Fellas". However, the

competitive masculinity of the father and son characters in *The Way Home* was visually asserted through Bailey's costume designs. Daniel and his father Felix were costumed for their "off the books" (as in not declared for tax) manual labour, in work boots and dirtied fluorescent high res vests (fig. 59). Paul, the Thompson father, was costumed in smart black trousers, shiny shoes and jumper with his company logo for his security guard job (fig. 60) and in branded sportswear. This second, casual costume is illustrated by fig. 61 which shows Paul dressed in a polo shirt, sorting through a tool box. Though his job and the uniform would typically exclude Paul from the stereotype of the thuggish Scouse "Fella", his designer sportswear had parallels to that worn by the criminal characters of Robbie in *Urban Legend* (chapter 5) and Mickey in *Lost Monsters* (chapter 6).¹²¹ These characters were also all played by Nick Moss, implying that the actor may have become somewhat typecast and his presence, with shaven head and in sportswear costumes was instantly recognisable.

Angs' costumes are of particular interest in their presentation of her as both a "Mam" and "Scouse-Bird" type character at different points in the play. Leanne Best described the character in a promotional interview for the production as having 'this working-class quality', a Scouse resilience to hard times. She implied that, for Ang, looking her best was an act of resistance, a way of putting on a brave face despite her marriage problems (Best 2006). Mainly Ang appears conservatively costumed in a muted pallet (fig. 40), but in scene 2 she wore a revealing black dress and matching jewellery (fig. 62) whilst putting makeup on for a night out. Bailey appears to have been depicting her dress as purposefully attention seeking, especially in contrast to matronly dressed Margaret in her shapeless full skirts and layers (fig. 41) who appeared in the background of the scene.¹²² Ang's confident "Scouse-Bird" preparation ahead of a night out away from the family home, was shown in contrast to Margaret's "Mam" subjection. Such images, particularly of northern, working-class women, link their perceived character and thus expectations of their behaviour to how they look. Like the romanticised visualisation of historic, poverty-stricken Dingle in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008), the presentation of Ang's as putting her 'lippy on' in order to walk

¹²¹ The character of Paul attempts to commit an act of violence against Daniel, after finding him working on a building job that Paul himself wanted, stating that he had tried to beat the teenage up, but Daniel had run away (Moss 2006: 73). It is left ambiguous in the script as to whether Paul is telling the truth and is in fact is the one responsible for Daniels' unexplained injuries.

¹²² This is shown in photographs not included within this thesis.

the door with her ‘head held high’ (ibid) despite her troubles, may glamorise the very real economic hardship and loss faced by comparable working-class Liverpool women, real and fictional, past and present.

Bailey’s visualisation of Ang and Margaret provided a stereotypical feminine counterbalance to *The Way Home*’s clichéd portrayal of Scouse masculinity. The comparable gender roles of the O’Connor and Thompson families were presented as common tenets of family life that echoed Bailey’s identical visualisations of their homes. This depiction of the two Liverpool communities as sharing values and physical space presented Scouse identity as a simplified homogenous whole. In fact, all of the designers of the “it happened right here” case studies visualised specific areas of the city, past and present, and the communities within them with little distinction or nuance. This lack of variation in the presentation of Liverpool communities and Scouse stereotypes on stage contributes to a common conception that Scouse identity is limited, clearly defined and lacks diversity.

4.5 A nostalgia for a harmonised “here”

The design strategy of all three productions was to establish the legitimacy of their representation of Scouse identity through seeming to visualise, accurately, precise Liverpool locations. The dramas focused on lives contained within family homes on working-class Oil Street, a Traveller caravan site and affluent Hope Street. The Liverpool experienced by those who lived in these areas would be related to their particular socio-economic demographic. Despite this, the audience was encouraged to join in, literally in the case of the participatory songs of *Hope Place*, with the plays’ sense of collective nostalgia.

In reference to contemporary interpretations of Shakespeare, Susan Bennett describes such blanketing nostalgia as skimming over heterogeneity in favour of a ‘false and dangerous sense of “we”’ (Bennett 1996: 5). Whilst such sense of “we” was inherent within the text of these productions, it was reinforced by their scenographic realisation. These visuals could be seen as having been aimed to bring the audience, regardless of their actual demographic, into a shared Scouse nostalgia. In *For Space* (2005) Massey discusses pining for an imagined time of community and spatial cohesion as ‘a nostalgia for something that did not exist’ (Massey 2005: 65). Her comments refer to an all-encompassing

understanding of the relationship between space and society. However, they seem applicable to the scenography of these productions, which connected to a popular, idealised image of the city as once having been united. Images of a fabricated united past can cast negative inferences on the city's present. This sense of idealism is defined by Massey in *Space, Place and Gender* (1991) as stemming from a belief in a time when the whole city was more of a recognisable 'us' (Massey 1991: 24). The 'it happened right here' case studies propagated belief in an 'us' (ibid) of Scouse culture rather than in a Scouse identity that is multifaceted

In *Staging the UK* (2005) Jen Harvie categorises such theatre as connecting to the 'national consciousness' of a community, whether or not that consciousness is rooted in factual or fantasised memory (Harvie 2005: 41). These case studies represent and express a belief in Scouse identities as once having been universal and harmonious in the city which can be considered such a 'national consciousness' (ibid). The productions being confined to singular domestic interiors in precise locations may be related to Massey's observation that such defensive localism refuses 'to acknowledge its [space's] multiplicities, its fractures and its dynamisms' (Massey 2005: 65). These "it happened right here" productions instead ultimately showed the families and their homes as cohesive. The Liverpool homes and families were presented with visual references in their designs tying the houses to their histories, inferring a sense of Liverpool identity as long standing. This identity could be read in these productions as something that had once been universal within a unified Liverpool and which now needed to be defended from those perceived as outsiders.

4.6 Press reception of *The Way Home*, *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place*

In common with the works introduced so far in this thesis, the attention paid to the scenography in productions by reviewers was relatively limited.¹²³ Nonetheless, the general discussion of the case studies in press and blog reviews is revealing as to which designs were considered truly evocative of "here", and what "here" symbolised to critics writing for local papers and those writing for the national press, whose audience would be based mostly

¹²³ Unless otherwise stated, the reviews for *The Way Home* and *3 Sisters on Hope Street* are drawn from their archived press review packs: Press Review Pack *The Way Home*, [Printed Material], EVT reference, EVT/PR/000453 and Press Cuttings *3 Sisters on Hope Street*, [Printed Material], 2008, EVT reference, EVT/PF/0002433

outside of Liverpool. Local coverage took ownership of *The Way Home* as from and about Liverpool. Joe Riley's review in the *Liverpool Echo* recognised Moss as being 'yet another local writer benefitting from the welcome revival of in-house production' (Riley 2006d) and *The Liverpool Mersey mart* (2006), *Liverpool Echo* (Riley 2006e) and local property magazine *Your Move* (2006) ran interviews with the local actors. However, Riley was exceptional in his praise of Bailey's design as effective, with reviewers locally and nationally describing its layering as having had a negative impact of the play's comprehensibility. Phillip Key, in *The Liverpool Daily Post* (2006), found the set 'awkward.... confusing' (Key 2006d) as he was unable to distinguish whether scenes were set in the house or caravan. He highlighted the design as *The Way Home's* weak spot, with the script and performances 'let down by the wayward production' *ibid*). In *The Times*, Sam Marlow (2006) also picked out the design as the production's key failing. He declared that the plays 'everyday' themes were ill served by its scenographic interpretation, with 'stagey moments' appearing 'incongruous in so naturalistic a piece' (Marlow 2006). Alfred Hickling (2006b) also found Bailey's design confusing. He described it in his review for *The Guardian* as 'congested' by its detail and nonsensical in the caravan interior being rendered 'king-sized' by being given the same floor space as the house (Hickling 2006b). Overall, the design was largely seen as distracting rather than having contributed to the play's meaning.

Although without exact reference to Bailey's costumes, Riley's critique of the play's representation of Liverpool women linked their limited characterisation to their visualisation. He criticised how the characters veered towards 'parodies of dimpled rosy cheeked peasantry or pushy hard-faced urban bimbos' (Riley 2006d). Riley's language frames these characters within the problematic narrative of resilience that I identified as associated with these stereotypes in 4.4.1. The "Mam" character of Margaret, likely to be the one thought of as akin to 'peasantry', suggesting a robustness and health despite being downtrodden, whilst Ang being considered 'hard-faced' (*ibid*) implied a thick-skinned ambition. For both characters, this judgement was probably magnified by their dress; Margarets dowdy long skirt and neutral clothing pushing her further into the background and a supportive role, Ang's striking, low cut black dress seen as evidence of her tough determination.

Whereas Bailey's set was criticised as obscuring *The Way Home's* narrative, Murchison's design for *3 Sisters on Hope Street* was praised for its perceived accuracy. Lynne Walker in *The*

Independent, dubbed it ‘wonderfully evocative’ (Walker 2008) of the period. Online review sites *British Theatre Guide* and *The Reviews Hub* respectively cited the ‘tremendous attention to detail’ (Fisher 2008b) and the ‘ornate, detailed and life-like’ (Gorst 2008) design as demonstrations of Murchison’s exactitude in recreating the Hope Street home. Timothy Ramsden for *Reviews Gate* (2006) referred to the production as a ‘sepia-toned portrait of life’ comparing the colour palette of the production to a faded (‘sepia’) photograph (Ramsden 2008). These reviews stressed the design’s realism but largely failed to comment on its selective naturalism, in how Murchison’s design reflected the ‘Lasky’s’ emotional states. Aronson states that such busy set dressing, of the kind that the reviewers commended as ‘life like’ (Fisher *ibid*) is typical of what has become accepted as ‘Chekhovian’ (Aronson 2011: 118). Aronson contends that the design style is so inseparably associated with stagings of Chekhov that audiences have come to expect detailed representation as the most appropriate for the playwright’s themes. Lizzie Loveridge reviewing for the theatre blog *Curtain Up* (2008) was rare in her recognition that the ‘detailed and accurate but rather dingy’ (Loveridge 2008) design also reflected the reduced circumstances of the sisters. Reviewers writing for publications from outside of Liverpool did not largely consider the city itself an appropriate setting for an adaption of Chekhov. The combination of Chekhov’s narrative, themes and Liverpool were viewed as incongruous, described by Walker as ‘bizarre’ (Walker *ibid*). Rebecca Omonira-Oyekanmi’s (2006) review for the blog *Indie London* suggested that appropriating Chekhov’s ‘majestic themes of national identity’ to Liverpool rendered *3 Sisters on Hope Street* ‘depressingly hopeless’ (Omonira-Oyekanmi 2008). Though Michael Billington (2008) in *The Guardian* applauded Murchison’s design as allowing the characters’ aspiration to burn bright against it, he still characterised its depiction of Liverpool as ‘drab’ (Billington 2008). Such comments were made despite there being no references or images of the city included within Murchison’s visualisation of the ‘Lasky’s’ living room.

Hope Place’s easily read signifiers, such as the maps and projected captions, allowed national reviewers an uncomplicated way to access what they subsequently understood as being an authentic depiction of Liverpool experience. May Mellstrom (2014) for *The Reviews Hub* commended McKintosh’s set for its ability to allow The Everyman audience ‘...to feel caught up in the history of the building simply by being there’ (Mellstrom 2014). Carole Baldock (2014) concurred in her review for *WhatsOnStage* that the projection design in particular had created an immediate ‘... sense of place’ (Baldock 2014). The production

was largely seen as having avoided clichés in text, dramaturgy and design by focusing on what reviewers mostly considered to be a faithful depiction of Liverpool everyday life. Billington in *The Guardian* commended how the self-awareness of the production in its recognition of how the city's history had been packaged, 'the working-class past as museum material or tourist-fodder' (Billington 2014). Sarah Hemming (2014) for the *The Financial Times* praised *The Everyman* staging a story about ordinary people, elevated to 'fill the stage' despite being confined to McKintosh's visualisation of Maggies' kitchen (Hemming 2014). Few national critics questioned the validity of *Hope Place's* scenography, reading it as a realistic envisioning of local life. The scenography that these national reviewers highlighted for praise was uncomplicated in its presentation of Liverpool and did not disturb their previous assumptions about the city and Scouse identity.

Reaction in the local press was much less sympathetic and more nuanced. Enthusiastic coverage was limited, *The Merseysider Magazine* (2014) an anomaly in agreeing with the national press that the production was reflective of real life experience. The majority of Liverpool papers and blogs were apparently exasperated by the production, feeling that it exaggerated Scouse culture to a point of pastiche. Although none made mention of the design specifically, local blog *Seven Streets* stated the production's references were so predictable that they could be ticked off like 'scouse bingo' (*Seven Streets* 2014). It is likely these references included visual ones. Vicky Anderson for Liverpool theatre blog *Made Up*, regarded the play as having deviated 'into Scouse Play territory' (Anderson 2014). That Anderson did not feel it necessary to elucidate what constituted a 'Scouse Play' indicates how widely the categorisation was understood by the local blog's followers. I understand a 'Scouse Play' to be an overly localised, sentimentalised presentation of Liverpool and Scouse culture, what *Seven Streets'* review criticised as a 'tired [sic]mythologizing of place' (*Seven Streets* *ibid*). These reviews were typical of criticism that found *Hope Place's* local references, textually and visually, had been overdone to the point of caricature. There was a sense from these local blogs, that the production depicted an image of Liverpool intended to be understood by, and therefore coloured by the expectations of outsiders.

Hope Place, *The Way Home* and *3 Sisters on Hope Street's* Liverpool settings were integral to the theatres' efforts to appeal to local audiences and to establish themselves as purveyors of Liverpool culture. However, though performances and narrative themes were praised in all the productions, it appears that the way the sense of the place was overplayed without

nuance actually served to alienate local audiences. The omission of any visual references to Liverpool in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* saw the characters' Scouse identity reduced to background rather than part of their lives. In *The Way Home*, the press found the forced amalgamation of the Traveller and Scouse culture identities by Bailey's design to be confusing and unfocused whilst in *Hope Place*, the use of cliché imagery distanced local audiences as evidenced particularly by Liverpool bloggers. The reception illustrates how the designers faced a difficult balancing act in creating scenography which showed the productions as having "happened right here" without resorting to clichés. Their visualisations of Liverpool had to be recognisable enough to be understandable to national critics, without exaggerating local characteristics or appearing to pander to outside preconceptions.

4.7 Conclusion

The case studies of Chapter 4 could be seen as having fabricated an anxiety about contemporary, diverse Liverpool by perpetuating a false history of Scouse identity as having once been fixed and consistent. The narratives oversimplified Scouse identity by presenting it as unable to exist alongside other aspects of self or without anchoring itself to an established lineage. The designers of the "it happened right here" productions had to carefully consider their approach to the narratives, aiming to represent Liverpool kinship without being sentimental. *The Way Home*, *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place*'s narratives are all concerned with a notion of "lost" traditions and community. Bennett (1996) discusses how a preoccupation with the historical has created problematic visions of 'tradition' which make 'powerful claim[s] for representations of the past that confirm a continuous untroubled narrative' (Bennett 1996: 151). The three "it happened right here" case studies attempted to visualise such an 'untroubled narrative'. Their scenography depicted tenacious family units living in the homes that had been passed down through generations.

These families were symbolic of a resilient, united Liverpool, coping with whatever troubles the outside world threw at it. The scenography encouraged audiences to perceive the Liverpool presented as authentic representations of the city and to tap into the ideology of Liverpool as having once been inhabited by a "lost" harmonious Scouse community. The productions' scenography included detailed home-spaces, shown as fortresses against

outsiders that threatened the family/Scouse unit's security. The boundaries drawn by a nuclear family are held by Massey in *For Space* (2005) as potentially open to 'critique parallel to that now so commonly made of those other conservative enclosures, the nation-state and the local community' (Massey 2004: 180). Audiences were presented with images of homogenous families as being accurate portraits of the 'local community' of Scouse within the 'nation state' of Liverpool. The families were shown as under pressure from changing circumstances or trespassers - new arrivals or new versions of Scouse identity that were divergent from the supposed "purity" of the original. This was in contrast to *Paradise Bound* and *Intemperance* where the 'new Scouse' identities (Scouse and queer, Scouse and Norwegian) were largely depicted as positive and progressive.

Although the plays' dialogue contained multiple references to Liverpool locations, their designs did not explicitly show the city, instead exposing the interior lives of local families through the interiors of their Liverpool homes. The scenographic markers of place such as the maps and signs of *Hope Place* tapped into a frame of reference based on Scouse stereotypes which required very little actual knowledge of the city. This can be seen in the disparity between reviews where McKintosh's design was praised in national publications for evoking an authentic sense of the city but was dismissed as clichéd by local journalists. In *3 Sisters on Hope Street*, reviewers on the whole appeared to agree that the realist, domestic detail was appropriate to the Chekhovian themes and outweighed the fact that the scenography contained little or no precise Liverpool references. Though the play recognised that Scouse and Jewish identities co-existed in the same individuals, through the characters of Nate and Debbie, primarily it used the Liverpool-Jewish community as a device to ask wider questions about identity and belonging. The lack of Liverpool specificity in the scenography meant that the interrogation as to Scouse and Jewish identities was primarily symbolic of broader, worldly struggles, rather than centred as a worthy enquiry in its own right.

In *Hope Place*, the audience were not expected to divorce their experience of being in The Everyman from the scenographic construction of the place they were seeing, instead the two were intended to overlap. As in Soutra Gilmour's design for *Eric's* (2008) (3.13), McKintosh's design destabilised the boundary between the Everyman and the represented place being created within it. In witnessing McKintosh's use of 'here' signs and the projected maps, audiences were made aware of their position within the theatre's

auditorium. They were being presented with events happening in that same physical, if not temporal space. The depiction of Scouse identities and Liverpool within all the productions examined in this chapter was tied, more so than any of the case studies considered in this thesis, to their scenographic realisation of precise Liverpool place. Their designs reinforced the narratives insistence on the events shown, even if fictionalised, as having “happened right here”, in turn underpinning the plays themselves as being “from here”. The designers’ visualisation of places likely known to the audiences, especially in *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place* set on the same street as, and within *The Everyman*, contributed to the creation of a mutual understanding between the theatres and local audiences. By this, *The Everyman* was showing local audiences that their perceptions of these exact Liverpool locations correlated with their lived and imagined experiences of them.

4.8 Summary of Chapter 4

In this Chapter I have examined some scenographic themes present in plays that exploited their “from here” standing as integral to their status as Made in Liverpool productions. Through a selection of case studies, I have demonstrated how detailed realism and representative design inferred a sense of authenticity even when the scenography made little reference to Liverpool. The importance of “home”, as both a domestic household and an idealised destination (a place where one belongs) emerges strongly in narratives and subsequently in the design of the case studies. Home, as the family house and as Liverpool, were visualised as was once having been fixed places inhabited by coherent identities, now under threat from outside influences.

In Chapter 5, I examine the counter-point to such productions that have drawn on the security of Liverpool as home. I will explore designs that moved away from heavily detailed set dressing and warm, domestic realism to stripped back sets and dingy interiors. These “too close to home” productions did not utilise nostalgia to present the Liverpool city experience. Conversely, the writers and designers showed Liverpool in an unfavourable light, taking the position that confronting the city’s problems and the challenges faced by its inhabitants amounted to a representation that could be considered more faithful. I will identify strategies employed by the designers to present these works as authentic through their exploiting theatre’s potential to disturb and unsettle those watching. This was particularly potent for these Made in Liverpool works with distressing narratives and

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images, where audiences were highly likely to have first-hand knowledge of events or places being depicted.

Chapter 5
Too Close to Home

A grand, gaudy, miserable Liverpool ...an alley flooded with red light; the park in which bits of the women's bodies were dumped.

Susannah Clapp 2006

5. Too close to home

In Chapter 4 I examined productions whose scenography utilised specific Liverpool locations and histories with the intention of evoking a sense of belonging and kinship in local audiences. In this chapter, I move my focus to productions where the scenography also used Liverpool images and stories that would be recognisable to a local audience but in designs that were intended to disturb. These “too close to home” case studies undermined the audience’s initial comfortable familiarity with what they were shown, through the introduction of visual elements that had the potential to affect them on a personal level. Though these plays could also be humorous and self-knowing, the exhibition of unpalatable facets of Scouse experience produced a problematic aesthetic. These works propagate a vision of Liverpool as especially dangerous and violent, with Scouse identities predisposed to criminality, especially offences around drugs and theft. Such assumptions have been commonly associated with Liverpool and, as I discussed in Chapter 2, widely disseminated by the national press. Here I question how the visualisation of narratives that perpetuate Liverpool’s negative reputation draw, and subsequently contribute, to this problematic envisioning of Scouse identity.

The two cases examined in this chapter were designed to encourage the audience to see the plays’ dark narratives as accurate images of the city. The two productions were written by local authors: *Urban Legend* (2004) by Laurence Wilson, and *Unprotected* (2006) as a joint collaboration between Lizzie Nunnery, Esther Wilson, John Fay and Tony Green¹²⁴ while they were on The Everyman’s writers’ attachment scheme.¹²⁵ *Urban Legend* was directed by

¹²⁴ Two writers went on to write further works for The Everyman and Playhouse. Lizzie Nunnery: *Intemperance* (2007) (Chapter 3, Part 1), *Swallowing Dark* (2013), *Narvik* (2015) (Chapter 6) and *The Sum* (2017) and John Fay: *The Cruel Sea* (2007). Whilst Tony Green had previously written *Kindness of Strangers* (2005) for the theatres, and Esther Wilson had contributed her play *My Eyes... Your Smile?* (2004) to the 2004 Everyword Festival.

¹²⁵ A year-long residency at The Everyman which was sponsored by Channel Five and Pearson TV. The scheme (2004-06) was short-lived, but is survived by the annual Everyword festival, a week-long festival of readings and workshopping of new writing.

Dawn Walton and designed by Soutra Gilmour, while *Unprotected* was directed by Nina Raine and designed by Miriam Buether, all of them, at the time relatively well-known, London-based designers and directors.¹²⁶ The combination of the local, emergent writers with the established directors and designers attests to the investment The Everyman and Playhouse had in these productions but also demonstrates how non-Liverpool production teams are perceived to give higher production values to locally produced plays.

The title of this chapter, “too close to home”, marks a distinct break with the visualisation of locally-known places that I explored in Chapter 4. In those “it happened right here” examples, the recognition by audience members of what they were seeing was intended to be heartening in its reassurance that they and the theatres shared a similar vision of Liverpool as physical home and spiritual homeland. Though *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* differed greatly in their form, the first being a dark comedy and the second a verbatim-based drama, the designers in both productions aligned the narratives of social issues to neglected urban vistas. By including uncomfortable, sometimes upsetting scenes occurring in familiar local settings, the designers destabilised the audience’s ability to watch the plays at a passive distance. Through analysing Gilmour’s presentation of *Urban Legend*’s tower block and Buether’s interpretation of Liverpool’s back streets and alleyways as featured in *Unprotected*, I will demonstrate how such scenography has come to stand for impressions of Liverpool as urban and neglected.

Combining plays that spotlighted social issues in the city with scenography based on disadvantaged inner-city landscapes and interiors is a pattern that can be observed across Made in Liverpool productions. *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* occurred in the seasons between Liverpool’s acquiring the ECOC title (2003) and the event itself (2008). During this lead-in period, The Everyman and Playhouse staged a surfeit of dramas whose bleak, urban designs served to emphasise narratives of Liverpool’s urban troubles. These plays

¹²⁶ Raine and Walton had been assistant directors at The Royal Court (in London) and Walton had received the Jerwood Young Directors’ award for her work at the Young Vic. Although this was Gilmour’s third show at the theatres following *The Mayor of Zalamea* (2004) and *The Kindness of Strangers* (2005), during this period she was working principally in off-West End theatres (Southwark Playhouse, Young Vic) and opera for the English National Opera. She would also later design *Eric’s* (2008) (Chapter 3, Part 2). Buether is a designer who infrequently works in regional theatre, most often designing for The Royal Court, The National and international opera.

were marketed as both local and universal in scope. Despite showcasing such negative facets of Liverpool experience, they were advertised as central in repositioning The Everyman and Playhouse as theatres of significance. In the notes to the *Unprotected* script (2006) Gemma Bodinetz described the theatres' programming as 'a rich slate' that had 'helped to put Liverpool's theatre back on the national map' (Bodinetz 2006). Bodinetz's emphasis on the theatres' need to regain a presence on the 'national map' (ibid) is indicative of the perceived importance of these productions being seen as relevant nationally. *Urban Legend* was marketed in a press release, authored by literary manager Suzanne Bell, as an exemplar of the Everyman and the Playhouse's new writing scheme which showed the initiative's ability to appeal to '...Liverpool and reach far beyond' (Bell 2004). It is questionable why these works, which visualised Liverpool as troubled and Scouse identities as downtrodden and criminal, were particularly highlighted as having the potential to appeal to national audiences.

Scenography that shows Liverpool as bleak, urban and full of tower blocks in order to frame narratives of austerity and hardship features prominently in the theatres' archives. To give one high profile example: *Love and Kisses from Kirkby* (1978) depicted the Merseyside district of Kirkby as desolated by the closure of the local Birdseye factory. Glynn Kelly and Billy Meall's design featured a concrete effect floor, graffitied wall, ski-slope and a rectangular structure painted with squares to suggest a tower block. The show's poster included an illustration of Kirkby as 'surrounded by rubble', which drew complaints for being too harsh on the town (Merkin 2004: 128-9). This criticism from Knowsley council demonstrates how although such productions are frequently praised for their truthful representation of Liverpool issues, they also underwrite Liverpool's poor national reputation. They entrench a representational connection between stories of desolation and distress, and scenography based on Liverpool's run-down streets, tower blocks and estates.

The representation of Liverpool's social geography within these productions can therefore be seen as having real-life consequences. Scenographic manifestations of Liverpool that appear to confirm its national reputation risk isolating the city and its inhabitants from outsiders and may even cause conflict between diverse Scouse communities. The city becomes imagined as fixed and without the hope for change. It develops into somewhere that those outside of it see as integrally bad, a victim of itself as opposed to its troubles having external causes. For those with local knowledge of the city, being presented with

visualisations of places or events they know intimately, in the context of violence, unsettles their real life everyday experience of them. A street that was once walked down without concern becomes re-presented as the backdrop to danger, a neighbour is rejected from the community because of their association with an undesirable Scouse stereotype.

Whilst these productions from the theatres' past and those contemporaneous to *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* dealt with imperative local issues, they also risked buying into negative national stereotypes. In Chapter 2, I examined how Liverpool has long weathered demonisation and bad publicity in national news media and popular culture. Over the years this has created a dominant image of the city as a depressed and dispossessed place. This image has largely radiated from the London-centric media rather than being representative of what local people actually express as to their experience of the city (Skidmore 1990, Belchem 2007). The way Liverpool is theatricalised is frequently unrelentingly violent and bleak. In the "too close to home" case studies of this chapter, I consider whether Liverpool as visualised in *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* can be seen as maintaining a cycle of rehashing these negative narratives, dictated from outside of the city.

5.1 Design of *Urban Legend* (2004)

Urban Legend premiered at The Everyman on the 29 October 2004, its narrative loosely based on author Wilson's own experiences.¹²⁷ The play follows three generations of Liverpool men: Horse (Al T. Kossy), Robbie (Nick Moss), and Wayne (Mark Arends), as they cope with daily life. Father (Robbie) and son (Wayne) are mourning the death their wife and mother Tina. Family friend Bobbo (Paul Duckworth), a former heroin addict adds to their troubles whilst also adding comic relief. The play is set in a high-rise block of flats in Bootle with detailed stage directions in the script that was published to coincide with the production at The Everyman. Bootle is a borough of Liverpool that once was a prime residential area for dockworkers. The area was bombed heavily during the Second World War and suffered high unemployment after the 1960s due to the decline in industry at the

¹²⁷ In an interview with Kevin Taylor for *Nerve*, Wilson explained how *Urban Legend* drew on his own life experience, bereavements and growing up in Crosby and Bootle. He related how the substance abuse and 'inner demons' suffered by the characters, masked by their jokes were partially autobiographical (Taylor 2004).

docks, gradually gaining a reputation as an unsafe and unprosperous neighbourhood.¹²⁸ Gilmour's design visualised Robbie and Wayne's Bootle, tower-block flat as dingy and dirty. Its austerity reflected the men's financial situation and provided a bleak background to their resilience, including Wayne's aspiration to escape to a more colourful, creative state through his music. With the exception of recent graduate Arends, *Urban Legend's* cast contained all Liverpool actors who were likely to be recognised by audiences from local theatre and television.¹²⁹ The casting of local-celebrity actors, as I observed in *Hope Place* (2014) (Chapter 4), was a deliberate move by The Everyman and Playhouse to attract a Liverpool audience and to visually assert the play as a Made in Liverpool production.

The limited production photographs available in The Everyman archive and provided by the theatres' press department show that Gilmour's set closely followed Wilson's directions.¹³⁰ The set dressing and design of the main interior space seems to have matched Wilson's directions almost exactly with its 'nicotine stained' wall paper and sofas which appear 'rotten and look to have been [sic] rescued from skips' (Wilson 2004: 17). The table is littered with 'ash, joint stumps, cigarette butts, empty skin packets, dead and alive matches, lighters' and the stained carpet scattered with 'foil pie dishes, newspapers, empty cans of Special Brew and other rubbish' (ibid). This precise correspondence between Wilson's directions and Gilmour's design is an example of the difficulty I discuss within the methodology (1.4), that frequently decisions made by the designer as to the play's visualisation will be subsequently attributed to the director and/or writer. This is especially problematic in new writing where the published script, including directions as to the drama's setting, has been developed alongside the production resulting in all subsequent stagings being related to that first designer's interpretation.

¹²⁸ During the Blitz in 1941, more than 50 bombs were dropped on Bootle, destroying or setting on fire 80% of homes (Anon 2011). The area was also the location of the abduction of James Bulger in 1993. Bulger's murder was a high-profile news story, with the CCTV images from the New Stand Shopping Centre in Bootle showing his being led away by his murderers widely publicised in newspapers and shown on television.

¹²⁹ Paul Duckworth and Al T. Kossy were regulars on *Brookside*. Kossy is described in the programme as 'one of Liverpool's best-known and best-loved characters', further emphasising his local credentials actors' (Wilson 2004: 9). Nick Moss, was a similarly well-known face on Liverpool's theatre circuit, later appearing in case studies *The Way Home* (2006) (Chapter, 3, Part 2) and Wilson's *Lost Monsters* (2010) (Chapter 6) as well as *The Mayor of Zalamea* (2004) and, previously, *Scouse* (1997).

¹³⁰ Cast and Production Photographs *Urban Legend*, [Photographic Prints], Photographer Unknown, 2004, EVT reference, EVT/P/000339

Fig. 63 shows the full width of Gilmour's set and suggests that *The Everyman* stage was set up in its thrust configuration. The set's central focus was the living room of the Bootle high-rise with Wayne's bedroom represented downstage. Flats covered with leaf-patterned wallpaper indicated the living room "walls" which ran parallel to the theatre's back wall. A doorway and window were set into this wall, the door appearing to lead to another space in the flat suggested by different wallpaper. It is unclear from the available photographs what the outlook from the window was. This means it is impossible to tell whether the flat was supposed to be at ground level or high up in the tower block. A second door can be just seen stage left. The two main spaces signified separate rooms, which was shown by the change in floor surface. Gilmour employed three different finishes: brown and orange carpet for the living-room space, green carpet in Wayne's bedroom and a beige-patterned runner between the two. The colours and patterns in the flooring were faded, stained, and 1970s in style, suggesting that the men had not redecorated for some time. Gilmour presented the men's environment as unkempt and squalid with the worn furniture littered with the debris of smoking paraphernalia, junk food and alcohol. The design overall implied a deficit of care and nurture, in opposition to the carefully maintained family kitchen and living areas described in Chapter 4.



Fig. 63. Press photo for *Urban Legend* (2004), Act 1, Scene 5, L to R: Robbie (Nick Moss), Bobbo (Paul Duckworth) and Wayne (Mark Arends), (Unknown 2004).



Fig. 64. Production photo for *Urban Legend* (2004), Act 1, Scene 2, Robbie and Bobbo, (Unknown 2004)



Fig. 65. Press photo for *Urban Legend* (2004), Act 1, Scene 3, Wayne (Unknown 2004).

Wayne's bedroom was an exception to the neglected state of the rest of the flat. The downstage area marked as his space was free from rubbish and was relatively tidy compared to the living room. Fig. 65 shows Wayne's record player and a makeshift shrine that served as a memorial to his mother Tina, with her hat, candles and a skull. In *Urban Legend's* text, Wilson describes Wayne's interaction with the objects as 'almost religious' (Wilson 2004: 56). Yet despite such reverence, Gilmour's visualisation contained absurd, potentially comic elements. The candles are arranged on top of a mat that is clearly emblazoned with a marijuana leaf, which makes explicit its true intended purpose was for the rolling of joints (fig. 65). The photograph also shows that the cloth that covered the cabinet, to give the impression of an altar, was leopard print. This juxtaposition of improvised, inappropriate materials belies the seriousness with which the character of Wayne imbues the ritual.

The supernatural significance of this shrine altar was emphasised by Natasha Chiver's lighting design. In fig. 65, her design can be seen to have bathed Wayne's bedroom in a purple light, a departure from the neutral lighting states for the rest of the action (figs. 63

and 64). These naturalistic states bled out to the edges of the stage which were dark (fig. 63), as if the men were surrounded by encroaching shadows. The encircling darkness implying a constant impinging threat. However, unlike the “it happened right here” productions discussed in Chapter 4, Gilmour’s representation of the men’s home did not necessarily represent security. *Urban Legend* included scenes beyond the flat and its immediate vicinity, such as Wayne busking in Liverpool city centre (ibid, p. 84). This implied that the men had a wider experience of Liverpool than that symbolised by their home-space. Rather than being enclosed, a room with a fourth-wall removed, the flat was left relatively open with the downstage playing space (beyond Wayne’s bed) almost empty of furniture and props. This openness in Gilmour’s design signified the austere situation faced by Wilson’s characters.

Although the sound design is outside of this enquiry, which is focussed on the visual elements of scenography, *Urban Legend*’s use of music was crucial to its presentation of Liverpool identity. Music, represented by Wayne and Robbie’s record collection, was shown as central to the men’s self-expression and their connection to the city. The stage directions indicate certain songs by Liverpool artists, including by The Beatles, Wings and John Lennon, to be played as interludes. Music also allowed the absent Tina to enter the space through the playing of a record by her band. The record is treated with reverence by Robbie and Wayne, as if it is the only relic they have of her presence. This highlighted the effect her loss had had on the men, and that their current existence was apparently entirely without women. Although the trauma of Tina’s death was key to the play’s events, I will examine in 5.4.1 how the presentation of the men as unable to cope without women plays into wider perceptions of stereotypical Scouse masculinity.



Fig. 66. Press photo for *Urban Legend* (2004), Act 2, Scene 4, Bobbo stealing Wayne's records, (Unknown 2004).

The men of *Urban Legend* were also shown by their costuming to embody the Scouse “Fella” stereotype. Following the trope that I previously observed in *Paradise Bound* (2006) (Chapter 3, Part 1) and *The Way Home* (2006) (Chapter 4), Gilmour costumed the working-class men in branded sportswear. All of the characters for which there is photographic record appear to have worn items of designer sportswear including Robbie's polo shirt, the logo just visible in fig. 64, and Wayne's Reebok T-shirt (fig. 65).¹³¹ The scrounging and casual-criminal character of Bobbo was dressed by Gilmour in trainers with Velcro fastenings and matching tracksuit trousers and jacket, an outfit that could be seen as a shell suit (fig 66). Shell suits have become cultural markers of an unsophisticated style preference common

¹³¹ No photographs available from The Everyman archive or press department show the character of Horse leaving me unable to analyse his costume.

with working-class, possibly violent, individuals, and the association of this garment with Liverpool has been propagated by news and entertainment media.

Gilmour's visualisation of the men and their environment reflected the play's themes – its graphic drug use and descriptions of sexual assault (Wilson 2004: 31, 106). I will discuss in 5.4 how this design could also be seen as exploiting the city and its inhabitants' bad reputation with Gilmour's representation of the play's working-class men as shell suited thugs, their lives played out in a bleak tower block confirming some of Liverpool's most negative associations. The play was based on Wilson's own experiences and set in a recognisable setting with local actors. In this sense, its visualisation of Liverpool was presented as accurate, if slightly exaggerated for comic effect. In 5.4 I will discuss how Gilmour's scenographic interpretation of *Urban Legend* played on national stereotypes whilst, at the same time, bestowed the play with a sense of being an authentic theatricalisation of Liverpool and Scouse experiences.

5.2 Design of *Unprotected* (2006)

Unprotected premiered on 10 March 2006 at The Everyman with a radio-play version also broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on the 17 March. After its run at The Everyman, *Unprotected* transferred to the Traverse theatre for the 2006 Edinburgh Festival. The production's long development was unusual for The Everyman and Playhouse and merits detailing as it may have influenced the final scenography. *Unprotected* was instigated through a project given to the four writers to explore Liverpool issues at the 2005 Everyword festival. The writers decided to examine the contentious issue of prostitution in the city. In 2005 Liverpool city council proposed a motion to create five managed zones on the outskirts of the city where sex workers could operate without fear of prosecution, in a bid to cut down on streetwalking.¹³² The proposal was put forward in 2003 in response to the murders of Hanane Parry and Pauline Stephen, sex workers who worked on the streets. The Home Office ultimately rejected the proposal in January 2006, shortly after the murder of Anne

¹³² The three areas were Kempston Street, a car park in Craven Street and an industrial area near Jamaica Street. See: BBC news online articles regarding plans to set up managed prostitution zones in Liverpool *Unprotected*, [Printed Material], EVT reference, EVT/PF/002410

Marie Foy, a sex worker who had been interviewed by *Unprotected*'s writers in September 2005.

The writers based the events of *Unprotected* on recorded conversations they conducted with sex workers, their families, council officials and punters, with some dialogue eventually spoken by the actors on stage verbatim from interview transcripts. In addition to this, real-recordings of interview extracts were played throughout the production. These included the voice of Foy at the play's close. *Unprotected*'s cast again featured many well-known Liverpool stage and screen actors including Paul Duckworth (*Urban Legend*) and Pauline Daniels (*Brookside*, *Breezeblock Park* (1986)). Each actor played multiple parts, apart from Leanne Best (*Paradise Bound*) who throughout took the role of prostitute Ali, a character constructed from the amalgamated experiences of a number of real-life sex workers. Much of the script was presented as a series of testimonies based on the interviews of the sex workers, their families and politicians.

The theatres highlighted *Unprotected*'s challenging subject matter and its uncompromising presentation, as a result of Buether's austere design, in the production's marketing. Examination of *Unprotected*'s press release and promotional material reveals that the theatres were aware of the play's potential controversy in the run up to the ECOC (2008) in terms of how it depicted the city and exploited this knowingly in its marketing.¹³³ The promotional handbills and poster of *Unprotected* featured a collage of constructed newspaper cuttings in bright red against a black background in imitation of red-top tabloid headlines.¹³⁴ Whilst this presented the production as based on factual events, authenticated by the "fabricated" headlines, it also hinted at Liverpool's negative reputation perpetuated in the tabloid media.

¹³³ In the production itself, there are sarcastic references to the proposed scheme being part of the ECOC's regeneration projects as 'a tourist attraction' (Wilson, Fay, Green and Nunnery 2006: 4). In their respective reviews, Dominic Cavendish in *The Telegraph* (20 March 2006) and Alfred Hickling in *The Guardian* (2006) both quote Ali as exclaiming in disbelief at finding out the city has won the title: '...Liverpool is the Capital of Culture? Liverpool is the capital of fucking prostitution!'. That the line does not appear in the published version of the script but was evidently in the production suggests that there was an attempt to connect the play to the debates concerning the ECOC and its benefits occurring in 2006. See: Press Review Pack *Unprotected*, [Printed Material], 2006, EVT reference, EVT/PR/000443

¹³⁴ Handbill *Unprotected*, [Printed Material], 2006, EVT reference, EVT/PR/000442. Poster *Unprotected*, [Printed Material], 2006, EVT reference, EVT/POS/000436

No photographs of *Unprotected* are recorded in The Everyman archive, and those provided for this research by the theatre's press department are the most limited of the case studies included in this thesis, with no image showing the full stage or the cast. The only clear photographs that show costumes are that of Ali's (fig. 67) and of Tricia Kelly playing an unknown character (fig. 68). These photographs show the women as wearing casual sportswear, underplayed compared to the exaggerated tracksuits in *Urban Legend*. With no further evidence, I have assumed that the overall costuming style was similarly realist. None of the provided photographs show the whole stage space, so I cannot be certain that *Unprotected* took place in The Everyman's thrust configuration. However, that it is implied by critic Susannah Clapp in her feature for *The Observer* (2006) where she reported that, to get to their seats, audience members were forced to cross the stage area which extended out into the seating (Clapp 2006a). This would have been the case if the playing space was set up with the audience on three sides. The act of the audience having to cross the stage would have brought them into the immediate space of the performers.



Fig. 67. Press photo for *Unprotected* (2006), Ali (Leanne Best) (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 68. Press photo for *Unprotected* (2006), Tricia Kelly, (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 69. Press photo for *Unprotected* (2006), Ali, (Vaughan 2006)



Fig. 70. Press photo for *Unprotected* (2006), Ali, (Vaughan 2006)

Buether's visualisation of *Unprotected*'s main setting, a drop-in centre frequented by the sex workers (figs. 67 and 68) was described by Lynne Walker in *The Independent* as 'sparsely furnished' (Walker 2006). Fig. 69 also shows how Buether's design was supplemented by projections created by London based AV company Grayscale.¹³⁵ Though it has been difficult to ascertain whether these were projected onto a screen or directly onto the back wall, the smoothness of the image in fig. 69 leads me to think that a screen was used. The projections were described by Clapp (2006a) as showing:

A grand, gaudy, miserable Liverpool: a statuesque, black and white panorama which slowly closes in around the speakers; an alley flooded with red light; the park in which bits of the women's bodies were dumped. (Clapp 2006a)

This 'alley flooded with red light' (ibid) can be seen in figs. 69 and 70. In the second image Ali can be seen clearly against the image of the backstreet compared to fig. 69 where the actress appears to blend into the background. This suggests that either the image was projected over Ali in this moment, or that the lighting (designed by Colin Grenfell) was also

¹³⁵ Grayscale were, like Buether known for high profile work in London including projection and video work for large scale West End shows such as the musical of *The Lord of the Rings* (2006) and The National Theatre's *His Dark Materials Trilogy* (2003).

red. In the photograph, this effect gives the impression of her being on the “street”, part of the projected image. The combination of the red wash, whether coming from the lighting or projection, mimicking the effect of a halogen streetlight, with Ali appearing desaturated of colour. Ali seems to have been positioned in fig. 69 centrally and as if within the projection, suggesting a departure from the stark realism of the drop-in centre to a more interpretative scenographic moment. The character being bathed in red light and isolated in the image gives a sense of her being in imminent danger, exposing the vulnerability of her life on the street as a sex worker. The projections included photographs of the real-life locations discussed in the play. This is confirmed by Clapp (2006a) in her observation that the images shown included ‘the park in which bits of the women’s bodies were dumped’ (Clapp 2006a). Parry and Stephen’s dismembered bodies were found in Stanley Park, an area likely to be familiar to a Liverpool audience. The park’s association with such a violent act must have had a more personal effect on these local audiences, who might also have more benign memories of the area, than it would for those outside of the city. I consider this in more detail in 5.5 and 5.5.1, where I compare the play’s impact in its Liverpool context of *The Everyman* to its reception from the very mixed demographic of the Edinburgh Festival.

In his review for the *Liverpool Echo*, Adrian Butler (2006) made particular note of the projections repeatedly prompting the audience that the events being played out in *Unprotected* were “too close to home”. He described the images used as showing ‘views you [Liverpool residents] see every day in case you had any doubts that what you are seeing is as real as it gets’ (Butler 2006). Buether’s use of elements of the real within the scenography was extended to the casting. At select performances, the role of politician Catherine (otherwise played by Tricia Kelly) was taken by Liverpool City councillor Flo Clucas, the then Liberal Democrat minister for social care. It is probable that a local audience would have recognised Clucas from her role in local government and her presence acted as a visual reminder that everything being presented was based on real, current happenings.

This inevitable recognition of local actors and real people and landmarks, alongside the use of recordings of actual interview extracts, heightened the effect of the production on local audiences. This was further intensified in a performance that included an invited audience of local sex workers. Clapp (2006a) reported the reactions of this audience as being particularly emotional with the sex workers ‘whooping and crying...[they] heckled ...wailed

at it, rushed out from it and then rushed back to congratulate its actors' (Clapp 2006a).¹³⁶ Her feature examines the response of these women to seeing experiences they had either personally had, or were familiar with, theatricalised. As I will show in 5.4, the real-world visual and sonic elements within this production created a sense of the production being "too close to home", with Buether's scenography designed to prevent the local audience separating Liverpool as seen in the production, and as daily lived.

5.3 Bare stage truths in *Unprotected*

The use of empty space by the designers of *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* differed in significant ways. Gilmour's use of the unlit space surrounding the men's flat was principally intended to represent a constant, imposing sense of danger for the protagonists. Whereas an apparent lack of theatricalisation, and space left empty of set, furniture or props, in *Unprotected* was used by Buether to frame the stage happenings as true-to-life.¹³⁷ This minimalism was a key feature of Buether's scenography and reflected how the production was marketed, with archived promotional material stressing the play's basis on verbatim accounts of sex workers and those associated with them.

In Esther Armstrong's (2010) overview of Nicholas Hytner's tenure (2003 to 2015) as artistic director at the National Theatre, she examines the popularity during that period of plays about '...current affairs' and which used the 'verbatim theatre model' (Armstrong 2010: 260, 268). The term 'verbatim theatre' is widely applied to dramas whose events and dialogue, fully or in part, come word for word from the documentation of a real-life event. Examples of such documents include the transcripts of court cases, political speeches, or interviews as in *Unprotected*. Armstrong's cites *Stuff Happens* (2004), the David Hare play about the Iraq war, which includes substantial quotes from politicians as an example of the 'verbatim theatre model' (ibid). In her analysis of *Stuff Happens*' scenography (as part of her

¹³⁶ It seems that the effect worked both ways with the presence of the sex workers in the audience also having had an emotional impact on the actors who looked out on their 'real-world counterpart sobbing in the stalls' (Clapp 2006a).

¹³⁷ Though no such claim was made for *Urban Legend*, it's being based on author Wilson's own experiences indicated that there was a level of truth to the way the play's happenings were depicted. This was despite an element of exaggeration and use of symbolism. For instance, Tina's hat (just visible in fig. 64, far right of the shrine), which was used to seemingly channel her musical ability to Wayne when he wore it to busk (Wilson 2004: 84).

enquiry into the visualisations of British identity at The National Theatre, she relates how the set appearing ‘less obviously designed’ was regarded by reviewers as having emphasised the play’s verbatim quality (ibid, pp. 282-6). Armstrong concludes there is a belief shared amongst reviewers that someone speaking on a bare stage could be assumed to be telling the truth (ibid, p. 304). Scenography that appears to have minimally changed the theatre space, and/or gives the impression of an empty, or relatively bare stage, is frequently interpreted as evidence that the drama that occurs within it is factual. This view can also be applied to the configuration of *Unprotected*’s minimal set and use of “bare” stage.

Buether also uses projected photographs of real Liverpool places to create an event more akin to a re-enactment than a theatricalisation. Unlike the sense evoked in the “it happened right here” productions, where the perceived familiarity of what the audience were seeing was intended to be reassuring, Buether’s organisation of space was intended to disturb. The photographic projections served to emphasise the documentary nature of the play. The images of recognisable Liverpool places would have had more instant credibility than locators that were evidently theatricalised, such as the projected map employed in *Hope Place*, and thus further enforced the play’s verbatim foundations. Coupled with elements of the ‘real’ that were present, such as Clucas playing herself and the recorded voice of one of the victims, the audience’s gaze was conditioned to accept what they were being shown as factual.

5.4 Disturbing through the familiar

The design of *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* enforced their narratives as authentic in different ways but in both the audience was not expected to find their recognisable visualisations comforting. Instead, the scenography corroborated that the unpleasant events occurring in the plays were an accurate representation of Liverpool life. The scenography of *Unprotected*, tied the tragic events, and the very definitive way they had been documented by the interviews, to the actual places, shown by the photographs in the projections. Both productions were “too close to home”, in that their presentation of Liverpool was intended to be unsettling

In *Writing Liverpool* (2007), Michael Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones observe that in writing about Liverpool, the focus on poverty, violence and sexual exploitation in the city is

seemingly stronger when there is ‘a determination to appear authentic’ (Murphy and Rees-Jones 2007: 22). Within such literature, to be Scouse becomes synonymous with a negative experience of Liverpool. It is crucial to reiterate that it has been historically the case that national media have interpreted stories and hyperbolic depictions of Liverpool as an especially perilous place, populated by wily delinquents, to be representative of daily life in the city. The designers of *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* created costume and set designs that appeared to take references from a similar bleak socio-economic image of Scouse issues, coloured by stereotypes. Their visualisation of areas of Liverpool as austere, urban and squalid is indicative of how such dispiriting depictions have commonly been considered as the “true” face of the city. This includes how the characters of the plays were portrayed, the men of *Urban Legend* and the sex workers of *Unprotected*, who represent some the city’s most deprived inhabitants

In *Urban Legend*, the characters and their experience of the city from their tower block home was presented through the scenography in a way familiar from TV and cinema tropes of Scouse identity (Crowley 2012, Barrett 2016). Gilmour’s design showed the Bootle flat as a gritty, dirty place and emphasised its residents as casual criminals, unable to pull themselves out of their poverty, addictions and trauma. The criminal aspect of the men’s lives was largely signified by their substance abuse that also was visualised in a way that was both explicit and darkly comic. The characters were shown as smoking marijuana using plastic buckets and the flat was covered with discarded cans and joints. Liverpool has long been held up as having a particularly bad problem with drugs and related antisocial behaviour. In the 1980s, organised gang-controlled drug dealing in Liverpool resulted in it being widely nicknamed ‘Smack City’ in the media; smack being a slang term for heroin.¹³⁸ The play’s scenography could be seen as having hinted at a wider image of Liverpool as urban and poor, and its inhabitants as culpable for their situation. Wilson’s criminal male characters were implied as typical of Liverpool’s underclass particularly by their costuming, which aligned them with a stereotypical idea of Scouse men as unintelligent and predisposed to crime. In his chapter “City of change and challenge”: Liverpool since 1945’ (2006), Jon Murden cites tracksuits akin to those worn by the men in *Urban Legend* as an item sneered at in derogatory humour about the city. He includes the garment within a list

¹³⁸ The term was used repeatedly in the media in the 1980s, a good summary can be found in the following post, written for Liverpool blog *Seven Streets*: “Smack City: Thirty Years of Hurt” (Anon 2013).

of the city's most mocked stereotypes that have seen Liverpool as: 'the tragically poor butt of countless bad jokes about moustaches, accents, tracksuits and thieving' (Murden 2006: 483). Murden's inclusion of 'tracksuits' on the same list as 'thieving' (ibid) shows the garment has become entrenched in Liverpool's labelling in national media.

5.4.1 Scouse "Fellas" in *Urban Legend*

In the preceding chapters I have considered the presentation of gender under the frequently seen tropes of Scouse "Fellas", "Birds" and "Mams". Wilson's programme describes *Urban Legend* unequivocally as a 'story of men without women' (Wilson 2004: back cover). The male characters across generations were presented as hard and without the compassion that Tina was supposed to have fulfilled in her "Mam" role. The old-fashioned décor, decay and neglect of the men's flat, suggested that perhaps it had not been redecorated since the death of the family matriarch. The men were visualised as having retreated into a feral, brutal masculinity. Through their costuming and actions, they were shown as models of the Scouse "Fella" national stereotype. Alongside the previously discussed tracksuit costumes, the actors who played Robbie (Moss) and Bobbo (Duckworth) had shaved heads, a haircut that has connotations with skinhead violence and football hooliganism.¹³⁹ Rory Magrath in *Inclusive Masculinities in Contemporary Football* (2016) includes references to the haircut as well as 'designer sportswear' worn by working-class football hooligans whose reputation was steeped in their predilection to 'sexism, misogyny and alcohol consumption' (Magrath 2016: 59-62). What the men of *Urban Legend* looked like set them up to be prejudged by the broad associations of their clothing and grooming, associations that are predominantly negative and levelled especially at working-class, northern identities from those outside of the region.

The vilification of tracksuits and branded sportswear as the uniform of a perceived social underclass is not unique to Liverpool. However, it is essential to restate that their particular association with the city is largely due to TV and film, including Harry Enfield's *The Scousers* sketch (Chapter 2). Louise Platt, in her chapter, 'Dealing with the Myths: Injurious

¹³⁹ See also Roger Burke and Ros Sunley's chapter. 'Post-Modernism and Youth Subculture in Britain in the 1990s' (1998), which examines the evolution of 1960s skinhead to modern youth subculture, and specifically in Liverpool its connection to football hooliganism (Burke, B. & Sunley, R. (1998).

Speech and Negative Interpellation in the Construction of Tourist places' (2016), writes directly on the use of the shell-suit as a shorthand for the perception of Liverpool people as criminal. She cites their use in the costuming of the Playhouse's *Flint Street Nativity* (2008) where Enfield's antagonistic stereotype was employed self-knowingly in the representation of some unusually argumentative shepherds (Platt 2016: 79). The context of the use of the 'scouser' (ibid) stereotype determines whether it is likely to be read by a local audience as a slur or as utilised for self-referential comic effect. Although visually presented as antisocial hooligans, Bobbo, Robbie, and Horse would most likely have been received favourably locally due to their humour and their being performed by popular local actors. The drab depiction of poverty and 'scouser' (ibid) stereotypes, portrayed by characters known to be local TV personalities was complex. This duality left the audience to decide which aspects of what they were looking at could be understood as an authentic presentation of troubled Liverpool lives, and what was distinctly tongue in cheek.

5.4.2 Broken families, broken city

In Chapters 3 and 4, I examined how the close family model has been emphasised through the case studies' scenography as foundational to Scouse identity. The families in *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* were shown as having been irreparably fractured through death. The macho Liverpool men of *Urban Legend* were presented as broken by the loss of the unifying matriarch, and in *Unprotected* the murdered sex workers were humanised by their stories being told by actors portraying their bereaved mothers. Murphy and Rees-Jones (2007) note in their exploration of Liverpool fiction, how the image of broken families has been frequently connected by authors to narratives of violence and deprivation in Liverpool set novels. They characterise this image as being a 'powerful indictment of the city's [Liverpool] failure to hold on to the working-class values of community and solidarity' (Murphy and Rees-Jones 2007: 22). This builds on the assertion I made in 4.4, that there is a mythology of Scouse founded on an imagined lost 'solidarity' (ibid) that has seen broken-family narratives employed to symbolise social decline.

Tina (the deceased mother figure in *Urban Legend*) was shown by Gilmour as still very present in the men's lives by the playing of her music and the inclusion of her hat and photo in Wayne's' shrine. The character was repeatedly manifested through artefacts she has left behind. In *Unprotected*, actors Daniels and Joan Kempson, portrayed the mothers of

Pauline Stephens and Hanane Parry ('Pat' and 'Dianne'), the two sex workers who were murdered whilst streetwalking. Reviews state that Daniels and Kempson stood sentinel-like on either side of the stage whilst scenes played out in the centre, their presence framing the action. Daniels and Kempson's performing of the mothers' interview transcripts was a reminder of the real-life basis of what was being played out in *Unprotected*. The real-life Dianne Parry discussed in an interview with Mark Fisher for *The Guardian* (2006) how she felt that the use of real photographs of Hanane within *Unprotected*'s projections had given her daughter back her identity after feeling she had been stigmatised by her only having been known in the press as a sex worker. Parry refers in this interview to one of the photographs used in the projections being of Hanane in school uniform, a conscious choice to show the young woman in an alternative manner to how sex workers are often pictured and stigmatised in popular imagination.

Available documentation implies that the complex presentation of the "Mam" figures in *Unprotected* was mainly achieved through the directorial decisions of Raine, rather than Buether's costumes. In an interview with Phillip Key for *The Liverpool Daily Post* (2006) Daniels spoke about her meeting with Pauline Stephens' mother Pat Brown. Daniels described Brown as 'the matriarchal Scouse mother, the type of woman this city was built on' (Daniels in Key 2006a). The way that Daniels and Kempson ultimately played these archetypal Scouse "Mam" personages, and how they were presented by their placement within Buether's space, could be seen as challenging the usual two-dimensional presentation of such characters as seen in *Paradise Bound*, *Hope Place* and as background set dressing in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008). However, although the "Mam" figures of *Unprotected* were given some agency, they were still presented as the trope, albeit an alternative version of it. The characters were still shown as steadfast matriarchs, their strength and resilience symbolic of the Scouse spirit upon which the city was founded in popular Liverpool mythology.

5.5 Press reception of *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected*

Press coverage of the two productions was heavily weighted towards *Unprotected*.¹⁴⁰ *Urban Legend* received very little national attention in comparison but was well received in the local press with *The Liverpool Daily Post* awarding it their annual award for best original drama. *Unprotected* most probably received more national coverage due to its extra publicity through the BBC Radio 4 adaption and the theatres pushing for recognition prior to the production's Edinburgh transfer. The perception, emphasised by Buether's design, that the production dealt with wider issues that had relevance beyond the city, may have also been a factor in this increased attention.

The only critic that made specific reference to the design of *Urban Legend* was Marjorie Bates Murphy in her national review for *The Stage* (2004). She determined that the 'detritus-covered' design was illustrative of the 'ultimate squalor' the men live in (Bates Murphy 2006). Bates Murphy's choice of 'squalor' was doubly employed with reference to Gilmour's representation of the men's sordid conditions and to describe their lifestyle. Bates Murphy appears not to have drawn a line between the men's immoral activities and the visualisation of their bad housekeeping. Bates Murphy did not connect the men's shabby environment to the wider social and economic problems in their lives, instead she seems to consider it an inevitable result of their perceived incompetence. *Urban Legend* was a darkly comic play, its humour underlined by the partially sardonic visualisation of the men's daily struggle by exaggeration and challenging of stereotypes, for example, having Bobbo played by a well-liked local actor. Yet Bates Murphy's comments imply she had largely missed the comedy and taken what she saw in *Urban Legend* as chiming with a national image of Liverpool as having brought its troubles on itself. In this, her comments differed from those made in local coverage which tended to praise the production's humour and characterisation of the men as resilient, funny and likable despite their hard circumstances.

¹⁴⁰ Unless otherwise stated, reviews and articles relating to *Unprotected* in Liverpool are taken from Press Review Pack *Unprotected*, [Printed Material], 2006, EVT reference, EVT/PR/000443. Cuttings relating to coverage of *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* in Edinburgh are taken from The Everyman Archive Press Cuttings box from 2004 Autumn/Winter Season, [Printed Material], 2006, EVT reference, EVT/PC/000091

The ability to paint over hardship with jokes was referred to in Taylor's aforementioned review for *The Nerve* (2004) as a 'traditional Liverpool thing' (Taylor 2004). Taylor's comments are an example of how Scouse humour is frequently recognised as such by local critics but missed by those writing for outside publications. Reviewers for national papers often seem to overlook elements of purposeful satire in their quickness to pigeon-hole theatricalisations of Liverpool and Scouse identities as either authentically gritty or as frothy sentimentality. *Urban Legend* showed Scouse identities as utilising Scouse humour, generally characterised as mocking and habitually vulgar, as a method of self-defence. The production represented another aspect of Liverpool identity, as one involving a retreat into homegrown jokes and self-made myths. This was exemplified by Wayne creating his own ceremonies at his makeshift shrine, in the face of a constant, unspecified threat symbolised by the darkness surrounding the men's flat. The play could be considered symbolic of Liverpool wielding the visual and cultural tropes of its localised identity as a survival strategy, exploiting its perceived uniqueness, comedy and resilience in order to ensure its self-preservation as exceptional in the face of globalised cultural homogeneity.

The critical reception to *Unprotected* widely praised The Everyman for the production's political nature and its spotlighting prostitution in the city. In *The Observer* Clapp typified the play as 'a campaigning piece' (Clapp 2006a). Her comments were typical of features in national papers which applauded *Unprotected* as having been constructive in bringing attention to the issue. Buether's scenography and Grayscale's AV design emphasised the stories being told as specifically Liverpool experiences involving local people, but the national critics discounted the relevance of the setting, reading the setting as a microcosm of streetwalking as a national issue. Carole Baldock reported in *The Stage* that 'They could tell tales like this anywhere in this country' (Baldock 2006a). Such casual comments, intended to be positive, relegated the play's Liverpool setting to just one example of a UK problem, disregarding the area's exceptional challenges, and conversely, qualities. This was widely not the case with the local press who recognised the piece as distinctively of Liverpool. This was linked to the scenography, particularly the projection design. For example, Key in *The Liverpool Daily Post* (2006) designated *Unprotected* 'a drama of the Liverpool streets' where the audiences were taken via the projected images from '...overhead cityscape to back alleys' (Key 2006b). The scenography, which showed local experiences happening in local locations, was here recognised as crucial to the play's depiction of a hidden Liverpool vice trade.

However, the language reviewers employed to describe *Unprotected* characterised it as simple because of its ostensible minimalism. Though not explicitly mentioning the scenography, reviews linked the visual quality of the piece, as ‘stark’, ‘grim’ (Alfred Hickling in *The Guardian* 2006b) and ‘naked’ (Baldock *ibid*) to its themes. This interpretation appears largely to validate the analysis I made in 5.3 that the “bare stage” was read as evidence that the events being dramatised were true. The use of photographic projections gave the play the feel of a talk or debate as opposed to a piece of narrative-led theatre (Clapp *ibid*). The particular responses to the images used within the projections in local press (Key *ibid*) reveals how their presentation of Liverpool was received differently by audiences familiar with the locations being shown. This becomes more apparent in the reception to the production in Edinburgh (5.5.1) where the Scottish and festival press were on the most part unaware of the significance of the photographs for Liverpool residents, reading them as purely illustrative.

The scenography Gilmour and Buether created for *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected* was appropriate for each productions’ narrative themes of Liverpool’s social and economic issues. Their designs visualised Liverpool as a grim place with disadvantaged Scouse identities battling against their circumstances. Frequently, the overall impression that emanates from reviewers writing for national publications was that the versions of Liverpool being shown were accurate recreations of the city rather than theatricalisations that reflected the emotional quality of the dramas. This differed to the response of local reviewers and bloggers, as can be observed in the response of *Urban Legend* where although local writers like Taylor comprehended the exaggerated and absurdist visual elements, such as the shrine and the resin buckets the characters use to smoke marijuana, as intentionally comedic, Bates Murphy viewed the scenography as key to presenting the characters as ‘feckless’ (Bates Murphy *ibid*). This contributes to this research’s findings that scenography which includes layered symbols of Liverpool cultural identity is often not fully understood by reviewers from outside of the city. Instead the designs of Made in Liverpool productions are read in terms of how they correspond to national preconceptions.

5.5.1 *Unprotected* in Edinburgh

From its outset, *Unprotected* was intended for a life beyond The Everyman. The Everyman and Playhouse secured £4,000 funding from the Liverpool Culture Company to take the

production to Edinburgh for the 2006 festival at The Traverse theatre (Anon 2006a). The Traverse is one of the Fringe Festival's official venues, and work there is expected to be of high quality. Joe Riley, covering the transfer for the *Liverpool Echo* (2006) described The Traverse as 'the standard bearer' for the Fringe (Riley 2006c), demonstrating how this was considered a prestigious transfer for The Everyman and Playhouse. *Unprotected* was slightly abridged for its festival showing and, with much controversy, smoking by the characters had to be cut to adhere to Scottish guidelines. Smoking, which had been considered essential by Raine as providing the punctuation to the action, was replaced by cups of tea (Anon 2006c). During the Edinburgh run, one of *Unprotected*'s authors, Esther Wilson, gave an interview for the BBC Radio 3 *Free Thinking* series saying that as the national press were giving the production '...rave 4 and 5 star reviews a transfer somewhere was hopefully on the cards.' (Wilson 2006).¹⁴¹ The production also was the recipient of the Amnesty Freedom of Expression award and nominated for the Carol Tambor Best of Edinburgh prize. However, a much-discussed tour never materialised.

Immediately preceding the festival, Key in *The Liverpool Daily Post* (2006) stressed the importance of Liverpool shows being seen in Edinburgh as an advert for the city with the time being ripe for The Everyman and Playhouse to 'show its wares to an international audience' (Key 2006c). In the same feature, Deborah Aydon described *Unprotected*'s Edinburgh transfer as 'a perfect shop window' (Aydon in Key 2006c) that would hopefully lead to touring opportunities as well as attracting the best talent to work at the theatres. Bodinetz marked the moment as celebratory in the *Liverpool Echo* proclaiming The Everyman and Playhouse were 'flying the flag' for Liverpool at the famous theatre and arts festival (Bodinetz in Riley 2006c). It is questionable whether *Unprotected*, a production that could be said to exhibit Liverpool in a bad light could truly be said to 'fly the flag' (ibid) for the city. Despite its high production values and positive critical reception, it cannot be escaped that *Unprotected* visualised a Liverpool that corresponded to how the city had been smeared in press and popular media. Nevertheless, it was this perceived honesty of the play in visualising the worst of the city that was deemed to be its greatest asset. Riley was enthusiastic in how *Unprotected*'s issue laden narrative would not be able to be dismissed or regarded as 'a parochial visiting drama' (ibid). That this fear was even articulated attests to

¹⁴¹ The Everyman Archive Press Cuttings box from 2004 Autumn/Winter Season, [Printed Material], Press Cutting, 'Unprotected' BBC Free Thinking, n.d 2006, EVT reference, EVT/PC/000091

how much the theatres' reputation as less sophisticated, less likely to be at the standard to perform to global audiences, was still a concern not only for the theatres themselves, but for the local press on behalf of the people of the city.

There was a particular trend for verbatim theatre at the 2006 Edinburgh festival, and this was evidenced in broadsheets that included 'Reality Check' (Andrew Turpin in *The Financial Times* 2006) and 'Sex, Religion and Brando's Corset' (Fisher in *Scotland on Sunday* 2006). A breakout production was The National Theatre of Scotland's *Black Watch* (Burke 2006), based on the interviews from the Black Watch regiment serving in Iraq, at Edinburgh Drill Hall. *Black Watch* is of interest in contextualising the response to *Unprotected* as it would go on to be considered an exceptional example of verbatim staging. The acclaimed production was set by Laura Hopkins on a stage almost empty of set and props. This design was praised for its straightforward style and perceived authenticity, despite being highly theatricalised.¹⁴² This was explicitly linked to its staging, the believed emptiness of which Thom Dibdin highlighted in *The Stage* (2006) as key to setting the mood – 'the edges of the space to hint at what lies beyond' (Dibdin 2006). *Unprotected* was programmed alongside Larissa Bassett's one-woman show *Bodies in Transit* (2006) at The Traverse. Comparisons were inevitable between the two shows, with *Bodies in Transit* being based on interview transcripts of women trafficked into prostitution. Photographs from Larissa Bassett's personal website show that the set, whilst very different in style to *Unprotected* (an abstract interpretation of a single room, created by a metal framework), the designer (unknown) also surrounded it with a large amount of empty space.¹⁴³

Buether's minimal design was understood by the Festival and Scottish press as having presented an authentic image of the 'very specific plight of Liverpool prostitutes' (Steve Cramer in *The List* 2006). Writing in *The Skinny* (2006), reviewer Nine determined that the projections were key in their depiction of Liverpool streets to *Unprotected* being a rare 'accurate representation of a marginalised demographic' (Nine 2006). Though the exact locations and the significance of the photographs featured in the projection was not (as would be expected from reviewers unlikely to be familiar with them) discussed, they were

¹⁴² The 2006 inaugural staging of *Black Watch*, directed by John Tiffany, included scenes with expressive movements and gestural dance sequences such as the soldiers expressing their letters home through sign language, or representing an explosion through slow motion choreography.

¹⁴³ Available at <<https://ninalarissabassett.com/performances/>>. Accessed 05 May 2018.

recognised as crucial in showing a multifaceted Liverpool; both a ‘mighty metropolis’ and plagued with ‘back street squalor’ (Anon in *The Herald* 2006b). Yet, a common misjudgement levelled at Buether’s design was that its minimalism was without complexity. This was despite similar strategies being praised in productions such as *Black Watch* for their contribution to the production’s meaning. Nine diminishes the input of the scenography to being ‘simple... sufficient for the shows purpose and avoids distraction from the matter in hand’ (Nine *ibid*). The bare stage space was used within the scenography as a deliberate technique employed to create the sense that what was being said upon it was unadulterated. However, comments such as Nine’s, reiterated in similar statements made by Kate Bassett in *The Independent* (2006), override the scenography as having agency, reducing the design decisions to the purely practical.

On the review site *Culture Wars*, Andrew Haydon appeared to include *Unprotected*’s set in what he regarded as the play’s ‘dreadful lack of stage-craft’ (Haydon 2006). He compared *Unprotected* unfavourably to *Black Watch*, citing the latter’s ‘astonishing sense of spectacle’ (*ibid*) as making it vastly superior. His review was unusually disparaging and appears to have directly equated the national maligning of Liverpool and its inhabitants to how the city and local people appeared in *Unprotected*. Haydon stated that the play brought to mind the much-criticised Boris Johnson *Spectator* article of 2004, in its showing of a Liverpool ‘hooked on grief’ (*ibid*). He describes the production as evoking ‘the feeling of deliberate emotional pornography akin to tabloid “it happened to me” true life stories’ (*ibid*). Many of the phrases Haydon used to criticise *Unprotected* – ‘mired in self-righteousness, self-pity, self-aggrandisement...cheap sentimentality... revels in victim status... one-note tone of endless misery’ (*ibid*) – recalled the slurs levelled at Liverpool in wider cultural critique. Haydon questioned why the production neglected to include footballer Wayne Rooney, calling him ‘Liverpool’s most famous kerb-crawler’ (*ibid*).¹⁴⁴ It is a shaky connection at best to connect the activities of Rooney, which had been widely mocked in the tabloids, to the proposed controlled red-light zones, and Haydon’s conflating of the two is revealing as to his limited view of Scouse experiences. The conflation of *Unprotected*’s very distinct presentation of Liverpool underprivileged Scouse identities with a tabloid story demonstrates how wider

¹⁴⁴ Wayne Rooney was involved into a widely publicised sex scandal that claimed he had used sex workers since he was a teenager, including visiting a £45 a session brothel in a poor area of Liverpool. Rooney admitted to having used sex workers in a public apology to his fans and fiancée in August 2004.

negative perceptions of the city continue to colour how its cultural products, including theatre are viewed.

5.6 Conclusion

Analysis of *Urban Legend* and *Unprotected*'s designs and their impact suggests that the designers' intent was for the scenography to locate and relate the events depicted to recognisable experiences of Liverpool, whether those experiences be the first-hand provenance of local people or understood from mediated images. In each, the distinction between The Everyman auditorium as occupied by the audiences, and by the theatricalised Liverpool visualised by the scenography, was blurred by the use of stage space free of furniture or scenery surrounding the centralised sets. This seems to have had the effect of making the unpalatable events that occur within these plays more disturbing by their closeness. This configuration served to confirm a lack of separation between what was being related and those watching. This was especially observable in *Unprotected* where Buether's configuration of space resulted in audience members having to cross the stage. Her design was reminiscent of other verbatim productions which had similarly utilised bare stage in their designs to create a sense of authenticity. The absence of a clear boundary between the audiences and performers, prevented those watching from relaxing into any form of passive spectatorship. Though widely interpreted by reviewers that the "bare stage" signified bare, unembellished truths being spoken by the actors, the scenography in fact carefully manipulated the stage space and was designed to invoke emotional, personal responses especially in Liverpool audiences.

Urban Legend and *Unprotected* gave Scouse characters who would often be demonised, familiar faces through the use of locally known actors. Although judging by the reviews, this had a positive, humanising effect on the reception of those characters, overall, the scenography was not considered to be comforting. The inclusion of elements of the real in *Unprotected* (a local person playing herself; photographs of recognisable Liverpool locations within the projections) were unsettling, reminding local audiences that these events had happened – or were currently happening – for real in their immediate vicinity. This extended to the sonic dimension of the scenography where the performance of the interview transcripts was juxtaposed with the playing of the voices of the real-life protagonists.

The relationship between Liverpool cultural identity as presented in these two “too close to home” case studies builds on the circularity considered by Murphy and Rees-Jones (2007) in relation to writing on Liverpool. They assert that narratives of addiction, poverty, violence and prostitution feed into the negative image of Liverpool as frequently seen in the media. The reinforcing of these narratives has seen them become expected images of the city which writing on Liverpool in turn takes reference and inspiration from. How the vice trade, crime, drug and alcohol abuse were visualised by the scenography in *Unprotected* and *Urban Legend* related to media images of Liverpool, and of Scouse identity belonging to a delinquent underclass. This was discernible in criticism that directly equated what the reviewers saw with Liverpool stereotypes, the televisual version of Liverpool experience having permeated the national consciousness. Reviews by Bates Murphy (2004) (*Urban Legend*) and Haydon (2006) (*Unprotected*) demonstrate that this presumed knowledge of Liverpool can leave non-local reviewers unable to ascertain whether a production is replicating such mediated images for dramatic effect or offering a realistic portrayal of events. The mixed reception of these productions reveals how the theatres’ apparent verification of negative images perpetuated in the press and entertainment media, was seen in national reviews as proof of the productions’ authenticity. Yet local newspapers and blogs expressed concern that the repeated theatricalising of the city’s tribulations enforced those images of Liverpool as the norm, confirming national stereotypes. The relationship between Liverpool as maligned nationally and as visualised theatrically, however was also noticeable in the designer’s use of such loaded imagery – the shell-suits of *Urban Legend* and photos of grimy backstreets in *Unprotected*. A circularity emerges in how images of Liverpool known nationally through television and tabloid mediated images inflect how designers visualize Liverpool on stage and then in turn how such visualisations are received.

Unlike the “it happened right here” presentation of authenticity I explored in Chapter 4, the connection of these case studies to their real-life basis was visualised as testimonial, unadulterated truths spoken on largely “bare” stages. The scenography was purposed to convince audiences that what they were seeing was explicit and factual with no scenery to hide behind. The emptiness and grubby, unadorned nature of the sets was intended to convince audiences that Liverpool’s dark side was being exposed. However, elements of the designs such as costuming criminal characters in shell-suits and focussing the horrific events of *Unprotected* as occurring on dark inner-city streets, where danger seemed to lurk in every alleyway, called to mind an image of the city popularised on television and frequently

sensationalised in the press. These contemporary designs have entrenched an unpalatable presentation of the city, founded in The Everyman productions of the 1970s and 1980s, within the Made in Liverpool canon.

5.7 Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter I have identified how the relationship between Liverpool as place, and Liverpool and Scouse identity as often understood as undesirable nationally, influences their scenographic realisation. Through these “too close to home” case studies, I have explored the circularity in the way Liverpool’s negative reputation is partially sustained in theatricalisations of the city through scenography. In turn, these visualisations feed into a wider belief that Liverpool remains a dangerous and unpleasant place by stage depictions of it as such. I have also shown how designers purposefully orchestrate the stage space in order to break down separations between Liverpool as theatricalised and Liverpool as lived within The Everyman space; expanding on reflections by Armstrong (2010) regarding the use of empty stage space to indicate or to emphasise a production’s verbatim basis.

Though differing in intentions and style, the case studies of Chapters 4 and 5 utilised elements of realism within their designs to establish their narratives as being connected to, and/or about Liverpool and Scouse identities. In Chapter 6, my final case-study chapter, I move away from productions where the scenography aimed to manifest believability, to work that included visual elements that appeared strange or surreal against otherwise realistic narratives and dramaturgy. These three productions mixed recognisable visualisations of Liverpool and the northwest with fantastical moments to signify a theme of change.

Chapter 6
Familiar City, Unfamiliar Events

...it's a play whose flaws you can willingly overlook given the spellbinding ambition ...[the] strange, rough magic...

Alfred Hickling 2009

6. Familiar city, unfamiliar events

I describe the productions in this final case study chapter as having shown a “familiar city” intersected by “unfamiliar events”. I will discuss what effect the inclusion of surreal, unrealistic visual moments by the designers of these plays had on their otherwise unremarkable visualisations of north-west settings. The expressionistic quality of this scenography allowed for the relation of local happenings to a wider context, whilst maintaining a distinctly Liverpool lens. My analysis will show how this scenography indicates a less fettered stance taken in relation to Scouse identity by the theatres, with the designs presenting the city and characteristics of Scouse as less fixed. Thinking of Scouse-ness as unbounded does not necessarily equate to a dilution, with the identity in lived practice being determined by a multitude of diverse factors. I examine the ways in which the concept of Scouse-ness is expanded and subverted in these designs, and in doing so, how these productions represent a departure from the other case studies considered thus far in this thesis which showed Scouse identities through fixed, often stereotypical representations.

The three case studies I have grouped under “familiar city, unfamiliar events” are *Lost Monsters* (The Everyman 2009), *Scrappers* (Playhouse Studio 2013) and *Narvik* (Playhouse Studio 2015). *Lost Monsters* is the second play in this thesis by Liverpool writer Laurence Wilson (*Urban Legend* 2004, Chapter 5). It was directed by Matt Wilde and designed by Simon Daw, both known predominately for their work in London.¹⁴⁵ *Scrappers* and *Narvik* are the first case studies in this thesis to have taken place in the Playhouse Studio. A year after the Studios reopened as a performance space (2011), The Everyman and Playhouse launched a collaboration (2012) with the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA). This involved a graduating designer from the LIPA Theatre and Performance Design BA

¹⁴⁵ Wilde has worked extensively at The National and Daw mainly across London theatres such as The Globe, National and Royal Court (London). He had been involved with the development of new writing at The Everyman and Playhouse and so can be assumed to have had some familiarity with the space

being given the opportunity to work with a director on a production staged within the Playhouse Studio.¹⁴⁶ *Scrappers*, commissioned from Daniel Matthew who emerged from the Young Everyman and Playhouse (YEP) writer's programme and directed by Matthew Xia, was the second production to be designed by a LIPA student, Mari Lotherington. *Narvik*, by Lizzie Nunnery (*Intemperance* 2007, Chapter 3, *Unprotected* 2006, Chapter 5) and directed by Hannah Tyrrell-Pinder was also designed by a graduating student, Maeve Black.¹⁴⁷

The fact that the two studio productions were designed by final-year students is relevant to their inclusion as this had an effect on the process of their visualisation. This was confirmed by my interviews with Black and Lotherington, where they both stated that the design period was longer than would be the norm at the theatres, especially for a production in the Studio (Black 2016, Lotherington 2016). The students had to first audition for the role through an interview with the director where they proposed their initial ideas. Therefore, from the outset the visual aspect of the shows was a collaborative process with the director instrumental in the selection of that particular designer. *Scrappers* and *Narvik* also marked the first, major professional engagement of Lotherington and Black's careers, a fact that possibly accounts for the designs being especially ambitious. As emerging designers, Black and Lotherington were keen to use the productions to launch their careers by displaying their skills and most innovative work.

At the time of writing, there are no published texts for *Scrappers* and *Narvik*, so the analysis that follows is taken from my observation of the productions, interviews that I undertook with the designers and *Narvik*'s rehearsal script (Nunnery 2016).¹⁴⁸ In the published script of *Lost Monsters* (2009), the stage directions and in the narrative indicate that the play should be visualised in ways which break with the conventions of realism and naturalism.

¹⁴⁶ Other LIPA design prize-winners include Katie Scott (*Held*, 2012) and Adele Hayter (*Half Baked* 2014).

¹⁴⁷ *Narvik* was produced in collaboration with the Manchester-based company Box of Tricks. Box of Tricks toured a new production of *Narvik* in 2016, but this was not designed by Black. It was felt by both Black and Box of Tricks that her design was very particular to the Playhouse Studio. It had been broken up after the short run and there was the additional issue that many of the props and set dressing came from The Everyman and from LIPA's prop stores and so would not be available for a tour. Black also said that she would not have felt comfortable designing the show again for a tour as it would always have been secondary to her ideal design.

¹⁴⁸ The unpublished script was provided to me courtesy of Box of Tricks theatre company

Directions of a similar nature are not present in the rehearsal script of *Narvik* or required by the dialogue of *Scrappers*, however comparable unrealistic visuals were evident in each's staging. This is a common problem when attempting to discuss the scenography of new work as I outlined in the introduction, where attributing authorship in terms of what the production looked like is often given to the writer when the designer, as part of the creative team, has in fact had considerable input in shaping the conventions of how the play should be staged.

These un-naturalistic designs involved inclusion by the designers of illusory, poetic elements. Combined with lighting and sound, they created scenographic moments that were expressions of the characters' emotions, and their environments, as they became overshadowed by imminent changes outside of their control. These expressionistic moments had a symbolic resonance that highlighted this sense of transformation. Sometimes the characters were shown as aware of these visual interventions, at others they were absorbed into the logic of the world of the play. I will discuss how in the case of the latter, this created a dramatic irony, an extra layer of meaning manifested by the scenography that the audience were aware of, but that the characters were not.

Through this scenographic layering and through multifaceted identities being included within the productions, the concept of Liverpool place and Scouse identity was expanded. In the previous case studies I have considered, Liverpool and Scouse identities have largely been visualised as existing in a nostalgic bubble from the outside world. Even works that took a more critical lens on politics, such as on the ECOC (Chapter 3) and social issues (Chapter 5), were locally focussed. Such stagings effectively isolate Liverpool experience, separating it from outside influence and limiting its relevance to the immediate audience and their knowledge of the places represented. Place in this context is that which is experienced as part of familiar daily life and understood as “real”, “lived”, “grounded” (Massey 2005: 184). Scenography that weaves moments of the extraordinary into the visualisation of familiar places that would habitually be considered as “real”, “lived”, “grounded” (ibid), destabilises those normative associations. The designers used poetic and expressionistic strategies to demonstrate a north-west perspective, that encompassed the potential of the places being shown to progressively transform. This also includes the way characters in these case studies were visualised through their costumes as having found new ways to exist within the landscapes of a “new” north-west. In doing so, the designers as part

of the creative team on these productions, presented Scouse as an adaptable, resilient identity. In the introduction to his consideration of the city's reinvention, Ronaldo Munck (2003) poses that Liverpool should aim to improve how it operates, and the experience of its inhabitants by listening to local voices rather than outside bodies of supposed cultural, economic and political authority. These productions, by presenting locally known settings but with moments of surreal transformation, visually demonstrated how local places have been changed by global forces, although not in a manner that implied the local was without its own agency. Such agency is discussed by Munck as a re-conceptualising of globalisation, in that rather than being thought of as an external force over which locals have no influence, its effects are adapted to localist agendas (Munck 2003: 4-6). Though such changes are not without consequences and not always positive, local people are nevertheless empowered to centralise their own experience and reject the image of themselves as passive in the face of globalisation. I will argue that is one possible interpretation of these productions which appear to have taken a Liverpool perspective on wider issues, without discounting their local effects.

The presentation of Liverpool and Scouse identities in these productions can be understood as something less bounded and defined than the ways the city and its inhabitants have been conceptualised in the celebratory, nostalgic and verbatim productions previously explored in this thesis. I will demonstrate how the designs connected the everyday local places in which the narratives took place – a farmhouse on a motorway (*Lost Monsters*), a scrapyard (*Scrappers*), a Liverpool house (*Narvik*) and the characters that inhabited them with local and national issues. These designs reject the notion that theatrical representations of north-west and Liverpool experience have to be faithfully realistic to be considered authentic. By including “unfamiliar events” within their scenography and narratives, the plays showed that they were presenting a more expressionistic emotional experience of place that could encompass myths as well as truths and imagine a wider scope of possible futures.

Within these case studies, the particular blending of the “unfamiliar” into the “familiar” calls to mind the literary trope of magical realism. “Magical”, whilst a problematic term with its connotations of the supernatural is still appropriate as a description of the unexpected and unfamiliar scenography in *Lost Monsters*, *Scrappers* and *Narvik*. All the plays have an underlying theme of sorcery, the enchantment of an otherwise mundane

environment. Elements in the sets of each production changed throughout the plays' events to become more than they initially seemed. These transformations not only underscored the motif of change that ran through each drama but provoked a reaction from the audience. In my observation of performances of *Scrappers* and *Narvik*, I noted that the audiences responded with a mix of surprise and wonder to these moments, similar to the reaction you would expect from someone witnessing the performance of a magic trick.

My description of the scenography as “magical” takes its reference from how the term is used to describe the literary mode of magical realism. Literary magical realism has its roots in 20th century Latin-American writing as pioneered by Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez and Alejo Carpentier.¹⁴⁹ These authors intermingled realistic narratives with happenings that would more commonly be associated with such fantasy genres as fairy-tales and science fiction. The designers' use of “magical” moments within designs that were otherwise recognisably representative of the plays' Liverpool and north-west locations has parallels to this model of magical realism in fiction. In his chapter, ‘Magic and Realism in History: Magical Realism vs. the Fantastic Today’ (2014), literary critic Gene Bell-Villada characterises magical realism as a genre distinct from fantasy due to the fact that the ‘supernatural rather than being an intrusion, is simply a component part’ (Bell-Villada 2014: 53). Through the scenography and manipulation of space, the designers in these case studies blurred the boundary between the ordinary and extraordinary so that the moments that appeared “magical” became ‘component part[s]’ (ibid) of the action and overall setting. These moments served to insinuate that the familiar settings were more than they initially seemed or might be expected to be – a similar effect to the power of magical realism to ‘re-enchant the everyday’ as observed by Bell-Villada (ibid, p. 55). I acknowledge that the application of the term magical realism to designs related to the north-west of England could be considered problematic as the term is often seen as specific to work that is Latin American in origin and authorship. Writers, including Bell-Villada, have argued that magical realism in its literary form has elevated stories of unheard communities by using imagery that would usually appear in sweeping, nation building mythologies and

¹⁴⁹ These distinguish this use of magical realism from other applications. For example, magical realism was used by Franz Roh (1925) to describe German expressionistic painting where real, everyday subjects was painted in such hyper-detail that it was seen as celebrating the mundane.

fables. The “magical” scenography of the case studies, I suggest can also be seen to have comparably elevated marginalised local experiences and Scouse identities.

Magical realism has been used to describe theatre that blends the mythic with the realistic in previous scholarship, for instance, Ronald Smith’s article ‘Magical Realism and Theatre of the Oppressed in Taiwan: Rectifying Unbalanced Realities with Chung Chiao’s Assignment Theatre’ (2004) and Peter Holland’s chapter on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, ‘Magical realism; raising storms and other Quaint Devices’ (2014), however, with limited reference to scenography. Where it is discussed, for example, by Holland on the staging of Trevor Nunn’s *The Tempest* at The Haymarket (2011), designed by Stephen Brimson Lewis, the scenography is rarely regarded as integral to defining the work as magically realist. Although what the audience see on stage is clearly integral to their reading of the work as “magical”, Holland only attributes this to the work of the director and author, with the design dismissed as spectacle (Holland 2014: 190). Holland argues that Lewis’s design, rather than illuminating *The Tempest*’s magical-realist themes, was a distraction that resulted in the audience having a ‘spectatorial response’ (ibid, p. 192). He cites the design as having prevented the audience engaging with ‘the language, the relationships, with the problems of interpretation’ (ibid). This is illustrative of how scenography is frequently dismissed as not serving the play when it draws attention to itself, even when in doing so it elucidates the work’s underlying meanings. In my analysis of “unfamiliar events” as examples of scenography that relate to magical realism, I contend that their inclusion represents an extra layer of meaning as opposed to a decorative diversion.

6.1 Design of *Lost Monsters* (2009)

Lost Monsters premiered on the 22 May 2009, its title coming from ‘Trinculo’s’ description of ‘Caliban’ in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*: ‘Thou wert but a lost monster’ (4.1.1947). The play takes place within a farmhouse on a small island in the middle of a bisected motorway, forced to fork into two by the presence of the house, re-joining the other side of it. The farm is overseen by a ‘Prospero’-like figure Richard (Joe McGann), an eccentric entomologist with apparently magical powers. Richards’ cut off existence is interrupted by a group of petty criminals: Mickey (Nick Moss), his teenage pregnant girlfriend Sian (Rebecca Ryan) and Jonesy (Kevin Trainor), a young man with autism whose memory and math skills Mickey exploits to cheat slot machines. Wilson’s narrative encompasses many

dark themes which include onstage violence and plot lines involving suicide, sexual abuse and child abandonment. It is left to the audience to decide whether Richard or these interlopers who break into the house after their car breaks down on the motorway are the titular ‘Lost Monsters’.

The casting followed the pattern I have observed thus far in this thesis of featuring locally well-known actors including McGann (*Hope Place* 2014, Chapter 4), Moss (*The Way Home* 2006, Chapter 4 and *Urban Legend*) and Ryan who was well known for her role as ‘Debbie Gallagher’ in the Channel 4, Manchester-based comedy drama *Shameless* (2004-2009). Yet, in this instance, the characters they were playing, with the exception of Moss ‘(Mickey’), were not defined in Wilson’s text as being from Liverpool. Richard was designated as being from Yorkshire, which would have been at odds with the character being performed by McGann, who local audiences would likely strongly associate with Liverpool (Wilson 2009:17). This also slightly problematises my inclusion of the production as depicting Liverpool and Scouse identities, with the play seemingly set outside of the city and featuring a cast of which only one can be said to be definitely portrayed as Scouse.

However, there exists a real counterpart to Wilson’s setting in the Stott Hall Farm which is situated in the middle of the M62 between Liverpool and Hull. The landmark is well known, especially in the north-west, as is the urban myth that the house remains because the farmer refused to sell the farm when the motorway was built, forcing the constructors to build around it. The truth is more complicated and less sensational: the road was actually forced to divide because of land subsidence. The rumours regarding Stott Hall’s history are addressed by Wilson within the production in a speech by Richard. In this, the fictionalised owner of the farm dispels the (real) rumour, explaining that his character is eager to sell and the inability to do this has him ‘cut off like some sort of biblical leper’ (ibid, p. 50). In this, Wilson connects the farm setting directly to its real-life counterpart, and at the same time undermines the audience’s potential assumption as to the myths surrounding its origins. This sets up how the production will play with and subvert local realities and lore. Daw’s design might visualise a location and people from outside of Liverpool (on the road between it and Hull) but it is grounded on how that place and those people are perceived from a Liverpool perspective; the meanings that are given to Stott Hall Farm by those familiar with it from everyday experience and from local myth.

Unusually, the archived production photos include an image of the set design unlit (fig. 71), which clearly shows how *The Everyman* space was organised in its thrust configuration around Daw's interpretation of the "farmhouse".¹⁵⁰ The isolation of the house, floating in the middle of the stage, was evocative of its inaccessible setting but also placed the happenings apart from the audience on an island reminiscent of the play's references to *The Tempest*. The house was reduced to a back wall, inset with a window and door, and a slight intrusion of a side wall with a second window along which ran a piano. The stage right windowed section of the back wall was set slightly forward of the stage left. This, along with the sharp angle seemingly cut out of the house's floor (downstage left), gave the room an unbalanced feel. The irregular dimensions hinted that things were somehow "off", different from what one might expect from a similar domestic space. This subtle difference gave the house an alien, uncomfortable feel, unlike the clean borders traditionally seen in fourth-wall box sets, Daw's asymmetric edging introduced a tension as to the limits of house – where it ended and the outside began.



Fig. 71. Set up photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), (Warner 2009)

¹⁵⁰ Digital Set up Photographs *Lost Monsters*, [Compact Disc], Photographer: Helen Warner, 2009, EVT Reference, EVT/AV/000147

Above the interior space and at its edges, strands of metal (or material painted to look like metal) and cable were used by Daw to create a network of twisted branches. Daw incorporated debris around the edges of the set, including a car door that can be seen stage left of fig. 76.¹⁵¹ The tension between the natural and urban landscape was a key theme of Wilson's play, and it is dramatically drawn out by the scenography. The room was elevated, the farmhouse's wooden floorboards a step up from the stage, leaving The Everyman black floor exposed. Unlike the "bare" stage that was utilised in the design of *Unprotected*, the photographs and reviews imply that this space was not used by the actors, the action being restricted to the lit, farmhouse floor space. The house-space being isolated on the otherwise black (in colour and as in unlit) stage called to mind the seclusion of the farm and its being cut off by the motorway on either side. This sense of detachment was reiterated by playing with scale in *Lost Monster's* opening scene in which a spot-lit model appeared inside a suitcase (fig. 72) (Wilson 2009: 19). This miniature version of the farmhouse, surrounded by the motorway with wind-up toy cars, established the motorway setting but also the lives of the characters as being insignificant by reducing their representation to toys. In their easy manipulation by a sinister, hooded figure, the toy cars were vulnerable in the otherwise, seemingly empty, blacked-out space. The use of the model also positioned the audience as being so much larger than the whole world of the play and able to see the whole thing in overview from a zoomed-out perspective, conditioning their audience's gaze and establishing the logic of the rest of *Lost Monsters'* "magical" events. In particular that there were elements that "they" (the audience) could see but that the characters within the play apparently could not. The prologue closes with the mystery figure slamming the suitcase shut and violently removing the miniature from the space, underscoring the car crash as a significant moment of change for the characters.

¹⁵¹ Production Photographs - *Lost Monsters*, [Compact Disc], Photographer: Helen Warner, 2009, EVT Reference, EVT/AV/000150



Fig. 72. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Prologue, (Warner 2009)

The scale model appears from the photo to have been directly modelled after the real Stott Hall Farm, which at least some of the audience was likely to have been familiar with. It was unlikely, however, that any would be familiar with the house's interior. The furniture and set dressing that Daw selected for the interior instead reflected Richards' personality and circumstances. Having once been a dignified and well-off academic, the character was now segregated from society and becoming increasingly eccentric in his fear of the modern world. Items such as the armchair and wooden table appeared to have once been of good quality or even antiques, but they were now well worn and were falling apart. The chairs' ripped upholstery can be seen in fig. 73, and the worn patina of the table, having been painted or broken down. The room was also scattered with wooden boxes, plastic crates and car tyres (fig. 73), which suggested the character's hoarder tendencies.

Daw's set was predominately dark in tones with orange used throughout as a thematic colour, recalling the amber Richard uses to preserve bees. The colour orange was also used in Mark Doubleday's lighting design to add emphasis to the "unfamiliar" moments, when the characters revealed things about the house and its owner that seemed to be supernatural in nature. This golden-orange light is revealed in Act 1 (fig. 75) when Richard instructs Jonesy and Mickey to pull up the farmhouse floor and excavate the

bodies of dead rats, killed by a mysterious heat coming from beneath the house (Wilson 2007: 66). It is implied that this heat, illustrated by the golden light, is the source of the house and Richards magic powers. For example, in fig. 74, Jonesy is depicted discovering Richards bees, kept in a fold-out shelving system that mimics a honeycomb structure. The jars that contain the bees appear as if glowing with this amber light, as if lit from within. Though Wilson's script has Jonesy express surprised pleasure at finding the collection and the bees appearing large, as if magnified by their glass containers, their otherworldly glow is not stipulated by the text (*ibid*, p.35). The use of orange and gold as the colours of magic and denoting the unexpected can also be seen in fig. 76 when an ochre hazmat suit drops into view from above.¹⁵²

This symbolic use of colour was extended to Daw's costume designs. Richard's 1970s' warm, brown corduroy suit (fig. 77), though not orange in itself, was a contrast to the modern dress of the home invaders. The chronology of the photos suggests that the character of Jonesy began the play in a similar ensemble to Mickey with t-shirt, tracksuit trousers and trainers, which he puts on again to go outside of the house in Act 2 (fig. 80). Jonesy removes the hoody on entering the house to reveal an orange patterned shirt (fig. 74), one arm of which Mickey rips off to bind a wound he has sustained. The decision of Daw to costume Jonesy in an orange shirt, with a dotted pattern, mirrors both the house and the similarly patterned shirt worn by Richard. Jonesy, who in the narrative considers leaving his friends to stay at the farm, was thus shown visually as possessing the same "magical" colour as that which runs throughout the farmhouse. This costume journey reflects the character's transformation throughout the play, with the abilities Jonesy possesses as a result of his autism being recognised by Richard as something to be celebrated rather than a reason for his social exclusion. This leaves open the possible interpretation that his aptitudes, instead of their initial presentation as inhibitive, are reframed by the end of the play as "magical".

¹⁵² A specialist suit of covered overalls with face mask used in decontamination for handling potentially hazardous materials.



Fig. 73. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Act 1, L to R, Jonesy (Kevin Trainor), Mickey (Nick Moss) and Sian (Rebecca Ryan) (Warner 2009)



Fig. 74. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Act 1, Jonesy discovers Richards' bees (Warner 2009)



Fig. 75. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Act 1, Jonesy and Mickey pull up the farmhouse floor in search of dead rats (Warner 2009)



Fig. 76. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Act 1, Jonesy and 'Rebecca' find a hazmat suit (Warner 2009)



Fig. 77. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Act 1, Richard (Joe McGann) (Warner 2009)

Jonesy's initial costume and Mickey's were a further example of sportswear being used to suggest Scouse "Fella" type characters. Mickey's full tracksuit (fig. 75) and white branded sports t-shirt (fig. 78) indicate the problematic stereotype of Scouse masculinity as poor, ill-educated and potentially dangerous. Mickey is described in Wilson's script as: 'Tracksuited and as fit as a panther. King of the streets since he was fifteen. Cockroach', demonstrating how this sportswear has become synonymous in this context with dangerous, streetwise and parasitic type characters (Wilson 2009: 17). In contrast, pregnant Sian appeared vulnerable. Her costume (fig. 79) included many elements that defined her as belonging to an alternative subculture, with heavy make-up and patterned clothing. 'Daw's decisions as to her dress served to make her appear younger than Mickey, her outfit reflecting a middle-class teenage rebellion in contrast to the male characters whose backstories reveal them to be working-class (Mickey) and social outcasts (Jonesy). Sian is the only female character in *Lost Monsters* and her pregnancy marks her as emblematic of imminent change with her wanting to find a home where she can raise the child.¹⁵³ I will examine this in 6.5.1 as a repeated theme across all the case studies in this chapter, where the sole female character is portrayed as being the instigator of transformation in the lives of the male characters and their relationships to place.

¹⁵³ In the climax of the play, Wilson has Sian find blood in her knickers and Richard takes her and the rest of the runaways to the hospital after dousing the house with petrol. His burning of the house signals an ending, whilst whether she is about to give birth or miscarry heralds an uncertain new beginning.



Fig. 78. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* [Cropped Detail], (2009), Act 1, Mickey (Warner 2009)



Fig. 79. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Act 1, Sian (Warner 2009)



Fig. 80. Production photo for *Lost Monsters* (2009), Act 2, Jonesy and Richard, Outside in the field surrounding the farmhouse (Warner 2009)

The events of the play were contained within the interior and immediate exterior of the farmhouse. The opening of Act 2, pictured in fig. 80, takes place ‘outside in the field surrounding the farmhouse, which in turn is surrounded by the motorway’ (Wilson 2009: 87). To show this change in setting, the metal surround, that previously created a type of ceiling over the farmhouse, was dropped down with the girder-like structures entering the interior. As this scene takes place at the beginning of Act 2, I assume that these “girders” were lowered during the interval rather than being an active scenic transformation that occurred during the play. Through this change in position, this scenic element shifted from appearing industrial, to resembling something more organic. This was accentuated by Doubleday’s lighting which placed the metal-effect girders in partial silhouette, causing them to resemble tree branches (fig. 80), with the broken shadows reminiscent of the light in a heavily canopied forest. Daw’s use of these metal “branches” and their intrusion into the stage space has many potential readings but especially underlines Wilson’s theme of the tension between the natural and increasingly urbanised world.¹⁵⁴ The metal surrounding structure evoked the motorway, in its use of cables, the suspended car door and girders, and further the industrial development the road stood for. The farmhouse and the lives of those within it are shown as being immediately threatened by the encroaching road. This signified a change in style with the scenography emphasising that the play had shifted from any pretence of realism, echoing Richards’ increasingly overt use of his supernatural powers. In 6.4, I shall further discuss how this sense of change was accentuated by the scenography, in *Lost Monsters* and across the other case studies.

The plot of *Lost Monsters* moved between dark anecdotes from the hard lives of Wilson’s characters to a wider foreboding of the dangers of urbanisation. Yet its poetic scenography, with moments of transformation, such as the dual symbolism of the branches and the enchantment of the golden light, separates it from the “too close to home” uncomfortable realism that I examined in Chapter 5. Although Daw’s scenography did reflect some of the events that occurred within *Lost Monsters*’ narrative, it was also expressive of the characters’ emotional states and of broader themes contained within the play. In my analysis of *Scrappers* and *Narvik*, I shall demonstrate how this integration of the “magical” aesthetic with the hard-hitting, largely realist themes was used to emphasise change more widely for the

¹⁵⁴ Though Richard confirms early on that the house does not remain in the middle of the road as a point of principle, he is afraid of urbanisation that he fears is killing the bees and bringing about the apocalypse (Wilson 2009: 64).

landscape and for the characters' identities (6.5). Further in 6.5.1, I shall question what such poetic, expressionistic design signifies in its potential to present more complex, layered concepts of Liverpool and Scouse identity.

6.2 Design of *Scrappers* (2013)

Scrappers premiered on 24 November 2013. Its writer Matthews situates the play's events as happening, as in *Lost Monsters*, at a point of impending change, in this instance a scrapyard on the brink of closure. The yard's foreman Ken (Ged McKenna) has already weathered the end of one industry having been a fisherman before that trade declined. His life and that of his two workers, frustrated poet Morse (John McGrellis) and young idealistic O (David Judge) are shaken by Jodie (Molly Taylor), who arrives seemingly to revitalise their failing business but ultimately absconds with the cash box, thus accelerating its inevitable closure.

Like *Lost Monsters*, *Scrappers* marks a slight departure from the frame of reference of this thesis in its consideration of Made in Liverpool work as the play is set outside of the city. Matthews specifies the scrapyard as being in Fleetwood, a coastal town in Lancashire about 60 miles from central Liverpool. It is the particular themes of *Scrappers*, namely the fallout from de-industrialisation and the changing identities of working-class men in the face of this that led me to consider it within the frame of Scouse identity. Liverpool has historically faced a similar struggle in the dwindling significance of its docks and port as I discussed briefly in Chapter 2. In addition to this, designer Lotherington knowingly employed Liverpool stereotypes, especially with regard to Scouse femininity, as demonstrated in her costume designs. So, even though the stage-set was an interpretation of a Fleetwood scrapyard, much of the production's less tangible, atmospheric and symbolic elements emphasised by the scenography could be interpreted as Scouse. As with Daw's version of Stott Hall, Lotherington was charged with creating the scrapyard's sense of place as opposed to an accurate recreation. I will return to this sense of place and its contribution to creating the perception of "familiar city" for the audience in 6.4.

The Playhouse Studio has no standard arrangement for the audience, having individual chairs as opposed to the built-in seating of The Everyman and Playhouse's main spaces. Lotherington configured the seating so that the performance space was across the widest

edge of the studio, creating a slight thrust with limited seating at each side of the stage. By using the widest horizontal, Lotherington gave the actors more performance space and created more of a distance between them and the audience, as opposed to the intimacy usually associated with the Studio. The gravel-effect painted and textured floor extended out to beneath the two front rows of the seating. This scenic effect might typically be thought of as closing the space between the performers and the audience. Yet, in this instance, it created a contradictory experience for the audience of being simultaneously within and excluded from the world of the play. This was observed by Vicky Anderson, in her review for *Made Up* where she noted that the scenography ‘swamp[ed] the space’ whilst at the same time making the audience ‘feel as if we’re confined in it as well.’ (Anderson 2013).

Lotherington’s design had a comparable aesthetic to that which I observed in *Lost Monsters* and have typified under the “familiar city, unfamiliar events” designation. Her set design was a realistic depiction of a run-down environment, intersected with moments that could be characterised as “magical”. The two playing areas of the stage can be seen in the following photographs, taken by Christian Smith (2013) provided by The Everyman and Playhouse press department. Fig. 81 shows the scrapyard itself, surrounded by corrugated metal sheets (or, more likely, plastic painted as metal), and an interior space stage right separated from the “yard” by an open framework and suspended window suggesting walls. This was used as Kens’ shed, furnished with a barber’s chair and pieces of scrap he had accumulated, decorated with posters of the folk singer and social activist Woody Guthrie. All the space outside of the relatively organised office was crowded and seemingly perilous, with a pathway having to be created through the textured floor to allow the character of Jodie to cross safely on her high heels in her first entrance. The whole set appeared to be coated with a layer of grime and dust, indicating its neglect and abandonment.



Fig. 81. Press photo for *Scrappers* (2013), Opening scene, L to R: Ken (Ged McKenna), Morse (John McGrellis) and Ryan (David Judge), (Smith 2013)



Fig. 82. Press photo for *Scrappers* (2013), Morse reads his poetry to his workmates, L to R: Jodie' (Molly Taylor), Morse and Ryan (Smith 2013)



Fig. 83. Press photo for *Scrappers* (2013), Jodie, Morse, Ryan and Ken, (Smith 2013)



Fig. 84. Press photo for *Scrappers* (2013), Ken fishing from his boat in the final scene, (Smith 2013)

The interaction of the characters with the spatial configuration of the set and furniture served to inform the audience as to the relationships between them. The shed was used to separate Ken from the other characters. The indication within the play was that the office space had come to be a place of refuge for Ken and that he might be living in it due to his financial hardship. His chair was similar to a pilot's seat, giving the impression he was in the driver's seat and symbolising that he was more invested in the fate of the scrapyard than the other characters. Xia's direction frequently placed Ryan at the top of a stepladder (stage left, visible in fig. 83), slightly removed from the action and absorbed in his own art making.¹⁵⁵ This positioned him as an innocent witness to the scheming of other characters below him.

The window of Kens' office was used by Lotherington as a poetic device to create the impression of torrential rain falling over the scrapyard. The window appeared to "rain", with water pouring in rivulets from the top edge, gathering in a trough at the bottom of the window, rather than ever hitting the ground. Lotherington stated that her original intention was that for it to rain over the whole stage and that being limited to the window was a pragmatic solution to a technical limitation. However, at the performance I witnessed, the audience reacted to the impressive effect with astonishment akin to seeing a conjuring trick in that the "rain" seemed to come from nowhere and then disappear. The moment gave the scrapyard setting another dimension, having no correlation with the play's action or dialogue and passing without the characters reacting to it as anything out of the ordinary. This design decision, made initially as a solution to a problem, allowed Lotherington to expand this poetic scenographic logic throughout the set. It permitted interpretative, expressionistic design to co-exist with the dilapidated realism of the scrapyard. This included "stars" materialising in a night-time scene via small lights lodged into holes in the metal/metal-effect sheeting.

Lotherington dressed the stage with a large quantity of props and odds and ends appropriate to a scrapyard, with objects piled in every corner of the stage space. In her interview, she expressed her intention for the set to be 'really empty and full at the same

¹⁵⁵ Ryan spends much of the play whittling a miniature statue that recalls (in an abstract version) a real Fleetwood shoreline monument: *Welcome Home* (Anita Lafford 1997). This statue shows a woman and child welcoming the fishermen home from sea recalling Kens' old career as well as what was missing from the masculine environment.

time' (Lotherington 2016). This represented how the scrapyard's contents had once had great value, and now had been reduced to mostly worthless junk. Her design, whilst being a recognisable recreation of a scrapyard, also visualised the play's central premise; how the recession had left Ken and Fleetwood on the literal and metaphorical scrapheap.

Lotherington's highly interpretative design is evidenced by her selective approach to the objects she chose to occupy the scrapyard. In her interview, she explained that she included beach-combed rubbish, collected during site visits to Muswell Beach, to signify Ken's connection to the sea. Whilst this was partly a practical decision as she needed to amass enough set dressing to cover a large space whilst staying within her budget, Lotherington also wanted:

.... everything on stage to have some connection to the ocean... like this tiny piece of yellow plastic that was weathered by the ocean. (ibid)

The set dressing therefore was layered in meaning, not only used to fill the space with realistic clutter but also having a more symbolic significance in recalling the deterioration of Fleetwood's fishing industry. Other pieces of scenery had comparable multiple use and interpretations, including a large blackboard, centre stage (fig. 81), which had the days of the week and scrap quantities written on it by the actors to demonstrate the passage of time. Lotherington included a half-rowing boat stage left, covered over with rough wood. This boat had both a practical, in providing a small, elevated playing space, and symbolic function. In being only half a boat and therefore clearly unseaworthy, the boat had lost all purpose and value. It was presented as an object once vital to Ken's identity and livelihood now of no use or worth. Further, in being another maritime feature of the set, the boat was a poignant reminder of the decline of fishing and the legacy that has been left by the resultant mass unemployment in the region. At the culmination of the play, after the forced closure of the yard, Ken appears to set out to sea in his broken boat once again, complete with a fishing rod (fig. 84). At this climatic moment, the boat was dramatically lit from below in a bold blue using LED strip-lights and dry ice. This was a departure from the Ciaran Cunningham's otherwise naturalistic lighting design which followed the rhythms of days in the scrapyard, moving slowly from a bright, daytime state, to dusk and night. It was left ambiguous as what this dream-like sequence symbolised. In a similar way to the uncertain ending of *Lost Monsters*, it was left unclear whether Ken's fantasy boat ride was intended as a visual representation of his suicide or his decision to move on and leave the

yard, or even just a nostalgic daydream for the past. Although the precise reading of this final moment was left up to the audience, the scenography clearly emphasised that Kens life had undergone a major transformation.

Lotherington also showed at the end of the *Scrappers* that Kens situation had altered through his costume. She added a dark blue sweater or fleece to his dark blue overalls making him look more like a fisherman than a scrapyard worker. Throughout the play, the male characters were all costumed in similar overalls (fig. 82) with small indicators as to their individuality such as Morse wearing a burgundy polo neck under his, hinting at his ambition to be a beatnik poet. The dark tones of the men's costumes, coupled with their faces being dirtied, functioned to blend them into their dirty, industrial environment as can be seen in fig. 81. Lotherington allowed nothing to stand out as decorative or colourful in these early scenes, in order to draw attention to the arrival of Jodie as something different entering the space. The character of Jodie was purposefully costumed to provide a contrast to the men and their environment. The character's first costume, a bright pink velour tracksuit initially worn with high heels, can be seen in fig. 85. Lotherington described her costume design decisions for Jodie as echoing how, in the narrative, the character '...brings colour to the men's lives and then she takes the colour away' (Lotherington 2016).

Lotherington visualised this change in energy by adding red elements to the men's costumes after the arrival of Jodie including a red beret for Morse and a red hoodie for Ryan (fig. 82. and 83). Conversely, once Jodie became integrated into the world of the scrapyard, she lost colour, retaining her bright wellingtons but wearing the same overalls as the men (fig. 82) and dressing in khaki trousers and nondescript denim jacket outside of work (fig. 83). The cash box that Jodie ultimately steals at the end of the play was also bright red. This symbolised her taking the "colour" away with her when she left the scrapyard.



Fig. 85. Press photo for *Scrappers* (2013), Arrival of Jodie (Smith 2013)

Jodie's initial pink outfit was a loaded choice by Lotherington as it was suggestive of Jodie being a "Scouse-Bird" character, expected to be shallow and unintelligent. This outfit has different associations to those attributed to sportswear tracksuits like those I have discussed previously in relation to *Urban Legend*. Rather than being a signifier of unsophistication and criminality, velour tracksuits such as the one worn by Jodie, were popularised by designer brand Juicy Couture in the early 2000s as expensive, hyper-feminine leisurewear. I previously discussed similar costumes being used in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008) (Chapter 3, Part 2) to indicate female characters who were figures to be mocked for their unsophistication and perceived bad taste. By using a similar outfit for Jodie, Lotherington was setting up the audiences' expectations as to her character type and behaviour. I will discuss in 6.5.1 how these expectations were challenged when her actions showed her to be intelligent and complex.

Lotherington's design for *Scrappers* realistically visualised the hardship that recession and decline in industry have had on the north-west. This was offset by her inclusion of "magical" moments, the raining window, the appearance of stars in the scenery, which showed the environment to be more than the depressed place it seemed on first reading. The

scenography was layered, mixing the everyday with instances of the extraordinary designed to elicit a sense of wonder in the audience. This extended to the characters who were shown through the design to be multifaceted. Lotherington reflected the men's ability to be artistic, including Ken decorating his office with music posters and Morse becoming increasingly impassioned about writing poetry after having donned his red beret. These characteristics would be habitually considered at odds with their macho, "Fella" presentation as heavy drinking, manual labourers. In this, it is of interest that Ryan being played by Judge was a rare instance of a north-west, if not specifically Scouse, "Fella" character being performed by an actor of colour.¹⁵⁶ What the scenography of *Scrappers* revealed was the multi-layered and complex construction of north-west identities within a rapidly changing social, economic environment over which they had limited control.

6.3 Design of *Narvik* (2015)

My last case study, *Narvik*, premiered on 8 November 2015 and ran for only 11 nights. The work included Nunnery's musical compositions played live by the cast including Nunnery herself. The play is framed as flashbacks of Jim (Joe Shipman), a 90 year-old Liverpudlian ex-sailor. Having taken a bad fall in his basement, Jim recalls his time in the navy, travelling to Narvik (Norway) and Murmansk (Soviet Union) during the Second World War, as well as his relationships with Else (Nina Yndis) and his best friend and shipmate, Londoner Kenny (Lucas Smith). These memories were underscored by musicians (Martin Heslop, Vidar Norheim and Nunnery) costumed as drowned sailors, referred to by Nunnery as 'a jury of the dead' (Nunnery to Carragher 2015). The actors and musicians were all present on the stage throughout, forming a contemporary version of a Greek chorus, passing judgement on Jim's past actions. In an interview with Jamie Carragher for music magazine *Get into This*, Nunnery discussed how the Studio had particular appeal to her and director Tyrrell-Pinder. They considered the space's inherent claustrophobia reminiscent of that experienced by Jim, trapped on a ship for long periods of time ('a jury of the dead' (Nunnery to Carragher 2015). This sense of confinement was emphasised by Black, whose design contained multiple locations within the Liverpool basement.

¹⁵⁶ Judge is also well known as a black Liverpool actor due to his role in the popular locally filmed soap opera *Hollyoaks*.

The stage was set up along the widest edge in the same configuration as *Scrappers*, with the black back brick wall partially exposed. The slightly elevated stage was painted with a concrete effect that extended out beneath the first row of the audience. The space was crowded with objects including bunk beds, stacked suitcases and cabinets. These objects were allowed to shift identity, use and period in a fluid manner, such as a filing cabinet becoming a Second World War radio without any additions or changes. The props and furniture that signified the clutter of Jim's basement and also used to create the ship setting were carefully considered by Black. In a similar way to the process that Lotherington described for *Scrappers* in choosing sea debris to connect Ken to his past, Black wanted all of the set's dressing to have been items that would have logically been hoarded in a domestic basement but that were also symbolic of Jim's Liverpool identity. Black had planned to include 'maps... drawings in frames, photos... stuff like that of Liverpool from that time' but, ultimately, the limited time and budget left her unable to fulfil these ambitions for the dressing (Black 2016). Black's design for the basement, as can be seen in the following press photographs by Alex Mead (2015), was therefore a relatively realistic theatricalisation of such a space. The scenography transformed through minimal modifications the moving of a chest, the plugging of headphones into the filing cabinet, to become the locations that Jim was remembering. These memories, brought about by his possible imminent death, had a hallucinatory, murky quality, with scenes set at different locations and time periods flowing into each other in a dream-like manner.

This fluidity was emphasised by Black's inclusion of a shallow pool, with an island in its middle, in the centre of the stage (fig. 87). In her interview, Black outlined that her intention was for this pool to be read on multiple levels: on one level as the puddle that Jim slips on in his basement resulting in his immobilisation, on another level as symbolic of the bodies of water cited throughout the play including the Arctic Sea and the fjords of Norway. The presence of water was also supposed to remind the audience of the shifting, unfixed, variable nature of memory, signifying that the flashbacks were occurring from Jim's perspective and that he might be an unreliable narrator. Similarly, to Lotherington's design for the rain in *Scrappers*, Black stated that her original design was on a much larger scale with the water being much more encompassing of the space. She had planned for the whole stage to appear as 'a flooded basement' with 'little islands' that the actors would cross via planks of wood (Black 2016). The compromise of the small pool was reached to

allow the actors enough floor space to perform but for Black something was lost as to the otherworldly quality she wanted to achieve.

Black's use of metallic greys and khaki throughout the set reflected Jim's naval career. Industrial metal textures were repeated throughout the set – the metal filing cabinet, the framework of the bunk beds, the textured rust effect background – recalling the gunship that Jim and Kenny lived on for so long. The lack of bright colours contributed to the play's dull, melancholy atmosphere, which was accentuated by Richard Owen's lighting design. Black explained that she and Owens wanted the lighting not to be 'overly theatrical' and therefore avoided lighting straight down from the grid as much as they could. They included practical lighting fixtures within the design, such as the lamps on the bunk beds which are just visible left of fig. 88. The practical lights created concentrated, tight areas within the stage space (see fig. 89) which allowed moments of the play to appear private and intimate, the light closely highlighting the actors' faces. In contrast to these subtle shifts in lighting states, Owens employed LED tape around the inner edge of the pool of water making it appear to glow bright blue from within. The blue colour palette and multiple tiny beams that can be specifically achieved with LED tape created a hazy, mysterious lighting effect, similar to that which Cunningham created to highlight Ken's fishing boat in *Scrappers*, which also used LED tape. This created the impression of the pool being a mystical portal to elsewhere. In 6.5, I shall expand on how this scenographic moment epitomises another example within these case studies of materials within the scenography being used to express the immaterial themes of the play. As with the metal "branches" invading the space in Daw's visualisation of *Lost Monsters*' farmhouse, Black's design was practically serving the narrative whilst also expressing the emotional states of the characters, and the external implicit threats they were facing.



Fig. 86. Press photo for *Narvik* (2015), Jim is confronted by the dead, Present day –dream sequence, L to R: Else (Nina Yndis), ‘Sailor 1’ (Lizzie Nunnery), Kenny (Lucas Smith), Sailor 2 (Vidar Norheim) and Jim (Joe Shipman), (Mead 2015)



Fig. 87. Press photo for *Narvik* (2015), Jim’ slips in the puddle on his basement, Present day, L to R: Else, ‘Sailor 3’ (Martin Heslop), Jim, Sailor 2, Sailor 1 and Kenny, (Mead 2015)



Fig. 88. Press photo for *Narvik* (2015), Jim on the ship, during WW2, Jim supported by Else and Kenny, Sailor 3 operates the “ship’s” controls (Mead 2015)



Fig. 89. Press photo for *Narvik* (2015), Jim and Kenny, below decks on the ship, during WW2, (Mead 2015)



Fig. 90. Press photo for *Narvik* (2015), Jim dances with Else in Narvik during WW2, (Mead 2015)

The characters' feelings were also expressed through the use of music in *Narvik*.¹⁵⁷ Black incorporated the musicians' apparatus into the set, with a piano far stage left and props doubling as percussive instruments. The drowned sailor costumes of the musicians were boiler suits, each linked through insignia and additional uniform pieces, such as an undershirt or a hat, to a different navy (British, Soviet, Norwegian and French). The boiler suits were dirtied and broken down with Black describing in her interview how she had attempted to create a textured effect on the legs mimicking barnacles, implying that sailors had risen from the seabed after drowning. The sailors' costumes further suggested the otherworldly layer of *Narvik*, with the rest of the characters dressed in relatively realistic period outfits. Jim and Kenny were costumed in layered versions of Second World War British Navy attire, stylised by Black due to the full uniforms being too heavy and warm for the actors to wear throughout the show under the lights. Instead Kenny and Jim wore navy trousers and sweaters with braces, adding coats for the scenes in the Arctic Sea.

¹⁵⁷ The music underscored the character's moods and the settings. Examples include the use of sonar noises to emphasize the ship setting and traditional Russian folk music, played at an increasingly faster pace, to signify Jim's drunken, frantic dancing and mental unrest in the scenes set in Murmansk.

Black also explained that she wanted the men's dress to appear masculine and undecorated so that there would be no risk of them being associated with the popular culture images of sailors' uniforms as effeminate and theatrical (Black 2016). She particularly wanted to avoid this stereotype as, in the course of the play, the character of Kenny reveals that he is gay to Jim, who reacts negatively. The masculinity of the costumes furthermore made Else, as the sole female character in *Narvik*, stand out in her feminine, full-skirted dress. Black purposefully costumed Else in a deliberately different colour palette to that of Jim, Kenny and the drowned sailors.¹⁵⁸ Whilst all the other characters were costumed in nautical deep blues and greys, Else's hatred of the sea was symbolised by her wearing greens and browns with a floral print (fig. 90), expressing the character's connection to the land as opposed to the ocean. In 6.5.1 will return to Else in relation to the other distinctive, female characters (Sian in *Lost Monsters*, Jodie in *Scrappers*), who were costumed as deliberately different from the men and their inhospitable environments.

The events and supporting characters of *Narvik* were presented to the audience as seen and remembered from Jim's perspective. The scenography temporally overlapped the places being represented, transforming Jim's basement into the various locations conjured up in the flashbacks. What the audience saw expressed not just the events as they had occurred, but also how they had felt to Jim at the time, and the subsequent impact they had on him emotionally. Black's blending of a seemingly straightforward visualisation of Jim's memories, the naval outfits, Owen's naturalistic lighting, with the contradictory "magical", poetic elements such as the glowing pool showed these recollections to be unstable and ethereal. Her design highlighted the ghostly atmosphere of Nunnery's narrative with its 'jury of the dead', including Kenny and Else, conjured up by Jim to pass judgement on his past deeds. Here, Black's scenography, by augmenting the narrative themes of the play, as in *Lost Monsters* and *Scrappers*, was showing that the mundane and unremarkable, in this case a flooded basement, could be more extraordinary than they at first appeared to be.

¹⁵⁸ Although Nunnery herself played one of the sailors, the boiler suit with her pulled-back hair (Nunnery is second from the left in fig. 77) rendered her masculine, or at least genderless.

6.4 Familiar city, a sense of place

In each of these case studies, the audience were privy to factors that the characters were not, something that served to disrupt the realism of the scenography, creating an effect similar to Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*. In *Brecht and Critical Theory* (2013), Sean Carney outlines *Verfremdungseffekt* as a deliberate act of alienation by the theatre makers that prevents the audience from becoming over-involved with the play's narrative (Carney 2013: 787-832). *Brecht on Theatre, The Development of an Aesthetic* (1964) states that this alienation seeks to present the actor and their environment in a manner which is 'made strange' (Brecht 1964: 90-92), in other words the performance should not attempt to be convincingly natural or lifelike. The disruption of the familiar in these case studies differs from Brecht's distancing effect in that it was seamlessly blended with the designers' construction of a recognisable sense of Liverpool as place.

The designer's orchestration of space in *Lost Monsters*, *Scrappers* and *Narvik* made the boundary between the audience and the place being visualised indeterminate. Daw created an area of non-space between the island occupied by the house's set, whilst Lotherington and Black extended the floor, painting out to the first two rows of the audience. These visual strategies created an instability as to whether or not the audience were included or excluded, whether they should read the unlikely things they were being presented with as alien, or as an alternate expression of the productions' sense of place. The locations of these case studies signify a variation from the settings of the Made in Liverpool productions previously examined in this thesis. Unlike the exact places identified in previous case studies, the sites of *Scrappers* and *Narvik* were less precise.¹⁵⁹ Though *Lost Monsters* took, as its reference, a real location (Stott Hall farm) Wilson had created a fantasy version on it. The designers of these "familiar city" productions had to establish a sense of place through allusions that were less specific, as they could not so easily rely on references likely to be shared with local audiences.

¹⁵⁹ For example, *Hope Place* (2014) was set in The Everyman itself, and *Unprotected* included projected photographs of Stanley Park as part of the design.

6.5 Unfamiliar events, transformative scenography

Daw included fairy-tale motifs in his design for *Lost Monsters* to express Wilson's exaggeration of the urban myths and rumours about the mysteries of Stott Hall Farm. In her interview Black (2016) cited Nunnery as having wanted to create a similar story-telling, mythic style for *Narvik*. Black described her design as having tried to reflect Nunnery's 'yarn or shanty' (Black 2016) style of narrative, seeing it as a particular Scouse attribute. In her exploration of magical realism and postmodern fiction, Wendy Faris (1995) links the narratives of magical realist novels to the 'local lore' that underlies their setting (Faris 1995: 182). The "magic" that was demonstrated by designers in these case studies did not link to some ancient belief system or folklore, but utilised Liverpool's tendency to build mythologies around the histories that the city tells about itself and its identity. In particular, each of these productions was set at a pivotal point, between a Liverpool past and a potential Liverpool future, that was highlighted in their visualisation. In *Lost Monsters*, the fate of the Stott Hall farmhouse and those within it was shown to be at a critical juncture, under threat from a changing world, with this fracturing shown by the branches breaking through. Within Wilson's narrative, each of the characters were positioned to change their situation if they were willing to accept certain truths about themselves; once they had achieved this, they were able to move forward.

The designs of *Lost Monsters*, *Scrappers* and *Narvik* realised the settings in the stage directions. In *Lost Monsters*, some of the "magical" moments visualised by Daw were related to the play's plot, however, on the whole, the unrealistic scenographic instances were outside of the scripted narratives of the plays. Aside from these moments, such as the metal branches intersecting the house interior in *Lost Monsters* or the raining window in *Scrappers*, the set designs presented the audiences with unremarkable, recognisable realisations of familiar locations. This, coupled with, on the most part, no surprise expressed by the characters within the plays as to these strange events, renders their inclusion as having been intended to create an effect on the audience. The sudden manifestation of a visual moment that seemed to belong to a different genre, a fantasy or fairy-tale, in an apparently true-to-life drama served to unsettle the audience. The scenography troubled their expectations, leading them to look at the production and the events and identities it was depicting in a different way. The inclusion of these "magical" moments did not signify that the plays were taking place in an alternative universe where such extraordinary things were common-

place. Rather, the destabilising of what the audience expected to see, the theatricalisation of a local landmark, a Fleetwood scrapyard, or the basement of a local house, created uncertainty about the normative assumptions they might have about such spaces and the people who inhabit them.

The plays considered in this chapter feature a sense of imminent change at the heart of their narratives. The theme of transformations is both personal in the sense of the new life trajectories embarked on by characters and in being symbolic of larger socio-economic changes in the north-west. For example, in *Scrappers*, the threat of change that looms over the characters due the scrapyard's imminent closure is a microcosm of the decline of industry in the region. Ken's past as fisherman, a lost Fleetwood industry, was hinted at by Black's maritime themed set dressing and props. In *Lost Monsters*, the metal structure intersecting the house from the second act implied that the motorway and the urban landscape it represented, had permanently entered Richard's arcane world. Though the final fate of the characters is left uncertain in Wilson's narrative, the visual fragmentation of the house-space by this intrusion suggested that nothing would ever be the same again. In *Narvik*, Jim's life passes before him in the present as the furniture and props that constitute the material remains of his world transform to become part of his memories. The transformative capacity of the scenography, in support of the narrative themes of these productions, could be also be considered symbolic of the more extensive changes happening to Liverpool. In each play, the change occurring for the characters and their environments was dictated by wider national and global events such as urbanisation, the decline in industry, and war. This particular style of scenography that I have identified in these case study productions may be read as representative of how the places and people shown respond and adapt to such outside pressures. The inclusion of design elements that appeared "magical" added an extra layer of meaning for the audience, offering a different perspective on Liverpool and the north-west.

In an interview with Liberty Christmas for Liverpool John Moore's University BA journalism blog (2013), Matthews described how *Scrappers* was a story of a culture that was ending but that was not necessarily to be mourned (Matthews to Christmas 2013). He explained that although the play showed the end of one north-west industry and way of life, its end could also give space for new models of production and a wider range of identities (ibid). This can be read from the final scene of the play where Ken appears to go

back out to sea on his fishing boat. Although what this moment exactly symbolises is left open, what is clear is that the character is moving forward and that wherever Ken was going, he was moving on from the scrapyard. Expanding possibilities within the recognisable locations presented in these case studies allowed the characters within them to also push against the preconceptions as to what Scouse is and could be. While the changes to the visualised settings were dictated by outside events, the urban development in *Lost Monsters*, the decline of industry in *Scrappers* and the aftermath of war in *Narvik*, the characters were not shown as without agency. Rather, they had capacity to adapt, resist and in some cases, change their situation.

6.5.1: Subverting gendered stereotypes

The narratives of the case studies considered in this chapter are predominately concerned with the experiences and relationships of male characters. In each play, the lives of the men were unbalanced by their encounter with an unconventional woman. Black's costuming of Else (*Narvik*) marked her out as clearly different to the uniformly costumed men. The choice of earthy florals and simple, flowing dress emphasised Else and her actions as foreign within the play's harsh wartime setting, making her seem innocent and wholesome. She purposefully dressed the character in a full-skirted dress to make use of the garment's association with a normalised stereotype of femininity. Jim's remorse about the ultimate violent death of Else stemmed from his having abandoned her when she failed to live up to the pure and virtuous stereotype that he had projected onto her. In a similar way to the depiction of the female protagonists of *Lost Monsters* and *Scrappers* by Daw and Lotherington, the visualisation of Else as different to the other characters heralded change for the men, and for how a woman's role and identity in that stage-world is perceived. Encountering, and finally, listening to the female character led the men in each play to broaden their understanding and to consider new possibilities. These alternative ways of living were rooted in a rejection of the notions about Scouse masculinity that the male characters had previously held.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ For example, a key regret of Jim's is revealed to be the rejection of Kenny after finding out about the latter's was homosexual.

The costuming of Jodie by Lotherington merits specific attention in its referencing of the “Scouse-Bird” stereotype. In her interview Lotherington explained how Jodie’s first outfit, the pink tracksuit, was intended to have strong associations with a particular mode of Scouse female identity. She based the garment on similar outfits she noticed being worn by women in Liverpool, brightly coloured, comfortable clothing that was ‘designer, expensive’ but ultimately a ‘leisurely Saturday outfit’ (Lotherington 2016). Lotherington was aware of the cultural connotations of the garment and how it has been used to lampoon women like the ones she personally observed. She explained in her interview that her choice of it for Jodie was a deliberately subversion of the stereotype it represented. Lotherington was aware that an audience, especially a Liverpool one familiar with the “Scouse-Bird” stereotype, would expect a character dressed in such clothing to be a one-dimensional caricature. Jodie then destabilised these presumptions by proving to be a multifaceted character. It is suggested in the play that the character may have purposefully worn the outfit to convince the scrapyard men, and the audience, of her naivety, which is as the play progresses is revealed to be patently a charade.

Before the arrival and increasing influence of these female characters, the men in these narratives for the most part embodied traditional Scouse “Fella” traits. Mickey’s (*Lost Monsters*) criminality is indicated by his tracksuit, stained boiler suits denote the manual labour of the *Scrappers* men and Jim’s (*Narvik*) naval uniform is emblematic of a rigid masculinity. The theatricalised worlds that these men inhabited were shown to be tough, often violent places, their harsh atmospheres similar to that of the case study productions spotlighted in the case studies of Chapter 5.¹⁶¹ Instead of setting these characters and their austere circumstances against the urban, deprived vistas frequently employed to illustrate such narratives (Chapter 5), the scenography, like that of the characters’ personas, was purposefully layered and multidimensional.

This sense that these environments were temporary could also be considered against the premise established in Chapter 5, that the image of Liverpool as the urban and developed is synonymous with a negative idea of the city. The implication of a move away from urbanised and residential spaces to something wilder and unfixed by the magical

¹⁶¹ *Narvik* and *Lost Monsters*, in particular, were visceral in their inclusion of violence and brutality as described by characters’ and onstage action, for instance Jim’s gory description of Else’s’ mutilated body and Jonesy breaking of Mickey’s’ arm.

transformations could be understood as a reconsideration of what such a space could include. The “magical” moments were a visual mechanism for showing change and multiplicity, with each theatricalised environment and identity having multiple meanings and possibilities. The expressionistic and poetic scenographic elements were used strategically by the designers to open up these Liverpool and north-west places to a different politics of identity.

6.6 Press reception of *Lost Monsters*, *Scrappers* and *Narvik*

Uncharacteristically, the reviewers of the case studies considered in this chapter were relatively attentive to the complex scale of the scenography. The designs of the two studio productions were particularly acclaimed, noticeably more so than the minimalistic scenography commonly employed in that space.¹⁶² The critical response to *Lost Monsters* widely praised Daw’s design as transcending what reviewers perceived to be the usual standard of Made in Liverpool productions. Unless otherwise stated, press coverage of *Lost Monsters* is drawn from the archived cuttings in The Everyman archive, *Scrappers* and *Narvik* were too recent to have been archived at the time of writing this thesis and so reviews of those productions were compiled from predominately online sources.¹⁶³

In *The Stage* Chris High (2009) drew attention to the set’s ability to surprise, describing it as ‘an ordinary room on the surface that conceals a mish-mash of oddities in each and every cupboard and drawer that all add to the sense of the surreal’ (High 2009a). High pointed to this visual blending of unreality with the realism as key to the play’s overall success (ibid).¹⁶⁴ Michael Hunt for *WhatsOnStage* (2009) also praised Daw’s mixing of styles as elevating the play beyond local specificity, he noted how the ‘instantly recognisable’ was being used to ask wider ‘questions on society and the world we inhabit’ (Hunt 2009). The commendation of *Lost Monsters* as having exceeded expectations was countered with reviewers in national

¹⁶² For example, the stripped-back office design (designed by Alex Eales) of Nunnery’s *Swallowing Dark* (2011) was described by Alfred Hickling in *The Guardian* (2011) as ‘bald’ and by Daisy Bowie-Sell in *The Telegraph* (2011) as ‘generic...bland but functional’ (Hickling 2011) (Bowie-Sell 2011).

¹⁶³ Press Review Pack *Lost Monsters*, [Printed Material], EVT reference, EVT/PR/000503

¹⁶⁴ High made similar accolades on his personal blog (*Chris High Reviews*) with even more exuberance, it can be assumed as he was not there restricted by the paper’s guidelines (High 2009b)

publications questioning whether its innovative, high production values were at odds with its Scouse themes and performances. Alfred Hickling in *The Guardian* (2009) described Mickey's 'denuded scouse dialogue' as not belonging to *The Tempest*-esque world of *Lost Monsters* but to a 'different play altogether' (Hickling 2009). Hickling seems to have been suggesting that Mickey and his Scouse voice did not belong in a work that made claim to Shakespearian high culture. Dominic Cavendish in *The Telegraph* (2009), praised *Lost Monsters* as:

... unlike many of the Everyman's "home-grown" pieces which focus on the eternal struggle of simply being a scouser, it draws on broader and more worldly issues' (Cavendish 2009)

I highlight Cavendish's use of 'scouser', a term that, as I established in Chapter 2, is seldom employed with positive intent, especially by people not from Liverpool. Cavendish's use of it as a sweeping term, to encompass the myriad of themes covered in Made in Liverpool productions trivialises the theatres' 'home-grown' (ibid) plays. In dismissing the theatricalisations of the wide-ranging Scouse themes and issues of the city, Cavendish also appeared to belittle the culture and concerns of Liverpool in daily life. In contrast to such national attention, which saw Daw's dreamlike design as contradictory to its Scouse-ness, local reviews applauded *Lost Monsters* for its connection to global concerns. An unnamed reviewer in *The Liverpool Daily Post* recognised that Daw's encompassing of a 'universal location' within the farmhouse was a challenge necessitated by Wilson's themes but was not at odds with the play as a Made in Liverpool production (Anon 2009a). Such coverage typically describes Daw's design in language that relates it to fantasy or the supernatural including Catherine Jones in the *Liverpool Echo* (2009) who referred to the design as 'other worldly', (Jones 2009). Another unnamed author on the blog *Liverpool Confidential* praised the house as 'straight out of the Brontës' (Anon 2009b), aligning it with the literary gothic. Such descriptions reveal an understanding of Wilson and Daw's strange narrative and accompanying visuals as intentionally complex and perfectly in tune with a Made in Liverpool aesthetic.

Lotherington's design for *Scrappers* was similarly cited as central to the show's perceived success, seen as indicative of the play's ambition. Anderson (2013), in her previously noted review on *Made Up* stated that Lotherington's design was '...like nothing ever quite seen in the Playhouse's Studio space before.' (Anderson 2013) whilst Stephen Hornby (*The Reviews*

Hub) hailed it as having completely ‘transformed the studio’ (Hornby 2013). Lotherington’s set was considered exemplary and ‘evocative’ (Jones 2013). The scenography was also widely recognised as integral to *Scrapbers* being a political production. Ian Hall (2013) for *Liverpool Sound/Vision* detailed the design as emotive and as having conjured up the city’s past: ‘...the dusty nature of existence draws the audience in to a world in which many have forgotten’ (Hall 2013). He identified how ‘dying industry’ (ibid) was represented by the scrapyard and its visual references to the fishing industry. In *The Guardian*, Hickling (2013) referenced the setting, though without directly mentioning the scenography, as metaphoric of the political and economic issues changing life in places like Fleetwood.

Ken’s tiny scrap kingdom appears to be the last bastion of manual labour, while the long debate over whether to replace a bulb suggests the inevitability of lights going out all over the industrial north. (Hickling 2013)

Hickling’s comments were typical of *Scrapbers* specific Fleetwood setting being seen as symbolic of other northern places that had also been affected by austerity. Similarly, Colin Serjent, on Liverpool blog *The Nerve*, observed how the scrapyard set represented ‘... the desolate times a lot of areas of Britain are experiencing under Cameron and his Coalition cronies’ (Serjent 2013). Such comments recognised that the politics explored in *Scrapbers* and accentuated by its scenography went beyond Fleetwood, bringing to mind comparable northern spaces affected by national and global changes.

Overall, the critics seemed largely satisfied that the set was both central to the play’s ‘rusty realism’ (Roger Foss in *The Stage* 2013) and a wider metaphor of economic decline in the north-west. However, this conviction was not extended to the depiction of the characters, in particular the costuming of Jodie. The association between Jodie’s visual presentation and assumptions as to her character were expressed in a manner that could be considered derisive. Foss pronounced the character as ‘mouthy’, tottering across the stage in high heels (ibid). Glenn Meads, for *WhatsOnStage* described Jodie as having a ‘Carlsberg in one hand, Jimmy Choos in the other’ (Meads 2013). Hickling included Jodie’s first costume, which he called a ‘pink designer shell suit’ in his reading of her as a ‘loud-mouthed, lager-swilling ladette’ (Hickling ibid). He considered the character’s eagerness to swap said shell-suit for ‘grubby overalls’ as ‘remarkable’ insinuating that her being ‘uncommonly keen to knuckle down’ (e.g. to work hard) was at odds with how she appeared. His choice of ‘shell suit’ to describe the outfit was loaded, recalling that particular garment’s association with the

“scouser” stereotype (Chapter 2). Though Hickling read the scrapyards scenography as layered, his interpretation of Jodie’s costume appears to have been limited. In the local press however, Lotherington’s drawing on the “Scouse-Bird” stereotype was widely praised as a refreshing reversal of expectations. Anderson (2013) described Jodie as a ‘sparkling’ presence who ‘breathes life into all around and brings hope that there is future for an industry, and town, in decline.’ (Anderson 2013). Jones claimed that Jodie’s ability to ‘tease out the talent’ of the scrapyards men surpassed how she appeared, ‘revealing her underwear’ (Jones 2013). Jones’ review is revealing on demonstrating what Jones expected from the character as a “Scouse-bird” caricature, even whilst lauding her progressive portrayal.

Narvik received a greater amount of press attention than productions in the Studio usually merited, however the majority of this was local and centred on Nunnery.¹⁶⁵ Reviewers that did discuss the scenography observed how the Studio’s claustrophobic space was turned to the advantage of the production. Serjent (2015), again on *The Nerve*, summarised how the organisation of the space gave the audience a proximity to the performers where they could ‘literally stretch out a hand and touch one of the actors’ (Serjent 2015). Hickling’s review (2015) for *The Guardian* was an exception in recognising that the contribution of Black’s design went beyond the accentuation of qualities already present in the Studio space and encompassed the play’s wider themes. He linked Black’s use of water and the design’s ‘fluid’ ability to transform to the ‘chilled, hallucinatory quality’ of the play (Hickling 2015). He referred to the symbolism of the onstage pool and how the colour palette of cold ‘gunmetal and ‘Arctic’ greys alluded to ‘the ice-floes’ (ibid). Hickling suggested that the scenography was integral to *Narvik* being transitional, moving between locations, periods and emotional states, acknowledging the choices made by Black to include poetic elements to add an extra layer of meaning.

Across the case studies, national reviews tended to focus on the productions’ scenography as having extended the plays’ significance to encompass issues beyond the city. In the national press the designs were primarily praised as having gone beyond what was typically anticipated from a Made in Liverpool production. Reviews such as Cavendish’s (2009) of

¹⁶⁵ These include Carragher’s (2015) previously cited profile, and reviews by Jones (2015) for the *Liverpool Echo* and Jennie Lee (2015) in *The Skinny*.

Lost Monsters further evidence the observation that I have made previously in this thesis with regards to other case studies, namely that national critics rarely associate high production values with work set in, or about Liverpool. This differed from journalists covering the plays for the local press and media whose readerships were more likely to be familiar with the spaces and events being visualised and referenced. This coverage, from inside the city was more inclined to celebrate how the scenography facilitated the play's unsettling of those familiar spaces.

6.7 Conclusion

The narratives of the plays in these “familiar city, unfamiliar events” case studies were all themed around how north-west people and places had been changed by outside forces. There existed in these productions an obvious affection for the places shown and a celebration of the resilience of those that inhabited them. This was not rose tinted but instead showed characters such as Mickey (*Lost Monsters*) Jodie (*Scrappers*) and Jim (*Narvik*) as complicated and multifaceted. The productions centred on the experiences and perspectives of local people, with the scenography showing how their difficult circumstances were not solely the product of their location or inevitable due to their Scouse identities. Scenography's transformative ability to transform showed how Liverpool and north-west experiences and identities were constructed by outside political and economic influences as much as by local ones.

In previous chapters, I examined how the scenography of Made in Liverpool productions emphasised who and what in those plays was considered Scouse, and who and what was not. In the case studies analysed in this chapter, the “magical” interventions showed that these boundaries are unstable. The “magical” events were not shown as unsettling interruptions but absorbed into the logic of the theatricalised world of the plays. Where the surreal images happened in the course of the drama was carefully timed by the creative teams to evoke a state of wonder in the audience, that allowed the plays' happenings and meanings to be seen as having transcended the otherwise unremarkable settings. As a scenographic strategy, using design that drew from magical realism tactics allowed Daw, Lotherington and Black to create the possibility of other worlds or versions of the north-west and Liverpool. These alternate realities offered a different perspective to the defensive localism of protecting the city as having a singular established identity or as

overly influenced by national stereotypes. In these productions, Liverpool was shown to be in a two-way reflective relationship with the wider world rather than solely presented in opposition.

6.8 Summary of Chapter 6

In this chapter I have analysed Made in Liverpool productions which combined realistic design with expressionistic components that I have referred to as “magical” in the way they manifested unexpectedly within the course of the drama. The design took the productions beyond the confines of the locally recognisable environments being represented, transforming a motorway house, a scrapyard and a Liverpool basement, into globally connected, changeable places. I have demonstrated how the scenography supported the plays in their destabilisation of Liverpool and north-west stereotypes through introducing the unexpected into the visualisation of characters and the impossible into their environments.

The reception to these productions suggests a blinkering as to the assumptions regarding what a Made in Liverpool production can be, and perhaps beyond that, what Scouse identity can be. The transformative scenographic moments within these case studies showed how, rather than something singular and defined that requires protection and preservation from outside forces, Scouse identity and its theatricalisation could be seen as unfixed and malleable.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

7. Conclusion

This research set out to investigate how Liverpool as place and Liverpool identities were represented through scenography on the stages at The Everyman and Playhouse theatres in Liverpool between 2004 and 2015. The findings of this enquiry have implications for the fields of scenography, regional theatre history and cultural identity, as well as expanding previous studies that have examined the relationship between space, place and their presentation by theatre design. The period examined, 2004 to 2015, was a time of change and self-examination for the theatres and for the city, encompassing the early years of the theatres' amalgamation, the reopening of the Playhouse Studio (2011), the redesign and reopening of The Everyman (2014), and the lead up and event of Liverpool's year (2008) as The European Capital of Culture (ECOC). This enquiry examined the staging of twelve productions of new writing with Liverpool themes, produced by The Everyman and Playhouse during this period, under the branding *Made in Liverpool*. This research has shown how The Everyman and Playhouse presented particular visualisations of Liverpool as place and Liverpool identities on their stages at key points in time when the theatres and the city were considering their cultural identity, and how that identity was perceived locally, nationally and globally.

This thesis adds to previous scholarship that has recognised the capacity of scenography to be knowledge producing within a logocentric framework of production and for the material elements of design to carry meanings in their own right independently of text and direction (Howard 2002, Baugh 2005). It has shown how the organisation of space by these material elements in *Made in Liverpool* productions conveyed a sense of Liverpool-ness, and evoked emotional responses from the audience. These responses depended on the scenography being interpreted in particular ways. Individual readings of what is seen on stage are always highly subjective, however, these interpretations frequently differed for local people, with first-hand knowledge of Liverpool and Scouse culture, to the way what was seen on stage was read by those from outside of the city. Scrutiny of a wide range of press reception, including broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, online publications and independent blogs, has uncovered a disparity between reviews of *Made in Liverpool* productions written for platforms whose readership is located predominately within the city, and those with a national demographic. Taken as a whole, this inconsistency, where scenography is understood differently locally and nationally, has proved illuminating as to what aspects of

Liverpool cultural identity are associated with certain images, garments and other design constituents.

The case studies of this thesis were grouped to reflect the patterns detected in the scenographic representation of Liverpool as place and Liverpool identities. Each chapter linked the narrative style and themes of the productions to repeated styles and approaches to scenography. The analysis undertaken in the case study chapters resulted in findings that have significant implications in relation to:

- An expansion of previous studies that have considered cultural identity as embodied and expressed by national theatres (Harvie 2005, Wilmer 2008, Holdsworth 2014) and their scenography (Armstrong 2010, O’Gorman 2014) to a regional context
- A growing body of work that applies discourses on space and place derived from social geography to a theatrical context by considering how Liverpool as place is visualised through scenography from unfixed theatrical space.
- The establishment of press reception as a viable methodology for enquiries into scenography. Building on the use of reviews by Esther Armstrong in her PhD thesis (2010), this thesis aims to demonstrate that scrutiny of local and national press consideration of productions not only reveals details as to the final realisation of their designs, but also suggests how those designs were interpreted by different audiences.
- An extension of previous scholarship on Scouse culture (Crowley 2012) and its relationship to theatre (Barrett 2016) through close study of how the “Scouse-ness” – a sense of the identity (1.1.5) – was represented visually through material elements of design in Made in Liverpool productions.

- Offering a supplement to contemporaneous documented historiographies of The Everyman and Playhouse (Merkin 2004, 2011) through an examination of the scenography of their co-produced Made in Liverpool productions, situated against a broader acknowledgement of the theatres' design histories.
- The uncovering of new knowledge as to the relationship between cultural identity and scenography by considering what is seen within a theatrical production as essential to its representation of a place and its community.

This final chapter discusses these findings further in 7.1, before considering the contribution to knowledge made by this thesis and the potential for future research, concluding with a closing reflection.

7.1 Key Findings

7.1.1 The scenographic visualisation of Liverpool as place and Liverpool-ness

This research highlights how styles of scenography are used to reflect various narrative themes and/or aspects of Liverpool experience. The Everyman and Playhouse's programming of Made in Liverpool productions, and their subsequent design, reflected how Liverpool wanted to present itself, at a time when the city and the theatres were subject to periods of heightened local and national attention. Analysis of the case study productions has shown how the configuration of the material elements of design and of space added a layer of meaning to the Made in Liverpool plays and musicals. For instance, *Paradise Bound* (2006) and *Intemperance* (2007) showed how the scenography foregrounded the political and discursive stance of the plays on Liverpool's designation as The European Capital of Culture (ECOC). By overlapping sites (*Paradise Bound*) and temporalities (*Intemperance*), the scenography visualised widespread local opinion that the ECOC was only benefitting a small, already privileged portion of the city. These visualisations further emphasised how the two productions were highlighting the experiences of marginalised Scouse identities whose real-life counterparts were underrepresented in the city's ECOC preparations.

In contrast, the theatres changed their approach in 2008, staging two large scale musicals with impressive designs intended to be recreations of historic Liverpool institutions. The scenography of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* (2008) and *Eric's* (2008) was purposefully nostalgic, aiming to induce sentimentalised memories for a lost, idealised past Liverpool in the audience, as opposed to encouraging them to take a critical perspective on the city in the present day. This retreat into insularity and nostalgia can also be seen in the scenography of *3 Sisters on Hope Street* (2008) produced at this point in time where the theatres were keen to assert their position as uncritically supportive of Liverpool and the ECOC.

As the first Made in Liverpool production produced on The Everyman stage after the reopening of the new building (2014), *Hope Place* (2014) invoked the theatre and the city's history. Its design reinforced The Everyman's important position in the city through the use of projected maps and signs, leaving little space to question the complex boundaries of Liverpool-ness. The design of *Hope Place* emphasised a fabricated, comforting and nostalgic sense of Liverpool as home. This was a repeated theme across the case study productions where narratives that revolve around family drama and relationships are frequently presented within fourth wall box sets. In these designs, including *The Way Home* (2006), *3 Sisters on Hope Street* and *Hope Place*, the audience were positioned to be looking into detailed household interiors. Whilst this arrangement is relatively common for domestic dramas, it was of interest to this research in terms of what this implied about the presentation of Liverpool as home, and of close-knit Scouse families as symbolic of Liverpool kinship. Presented as windows into everyday Liverpool family life, under threat of being fractured by family break-up, these visualisations symbolised an imagining of the city as once having been inhabited by a secure and homogenous Scouse community.

The representation of Liverpool as place and Liverpool identities through scenography draws from pre-existing assumptions held locally, nationally and globally about the city and its inhabitants. This research has identified design elements, including costume, set and projected images, that are repeatedly employed in order to fulfil expectations regarding certain behaviours and experiences of life in the north-west, Scouse identities and Liverpool itself. These expectations, evidenced by press reception from inside and outside the city, differ at local and national levels. Markers of place such as the flags of Dingle in

Once upon a Time at the Adelphi and the projected maps and handwritten signs of *Hope Place* are frequently interpreted by the press within Liverpool as an oversimplification of local identity. However, reviews in national papers habitually respond positively towards such straightforward, unchallenging design approaches as authentic representations of Liverpool. This feeds into widespread local opinion that the London-centric press frequently takes a paternalistic and unfavourable view of Liverpool culture (Boyle 1995, Barrett 2016).

This is also evident in the reception of the designs of productions that employ particular imagery and characterisations to present the city and its inhabitants as dangerous, poor and lawless. These productions, including *Urban Legend* (2004) and *Unprotected* (2006) utilise the manner in which Liverpool has been represented as a place of above average criminal and violent activity (Skidmore 1990, Murden 2006), and its inhabitants stereotyped as devious and responsible for their own misfortune (Boland 2008, Crowley 2012). Designs that feature representations of run-down areas of Liverpool, tower blocks and urban landscapes are repeatedly used to underscore narratives of addiction, austerity and hopelessness. Whilst it would be false and unrealistic to deny there is social and economic deprivation in parts of Liverpool, these presentations further embed an unfavourable image of life in the city in the national consciousness.

This enquiry has also identified alternative visualisations of Liverpool-ness and a north-west sense of place through scenography, manifested in realistic design with expressionistic components. In this, this research has made a significant contribution to the vocabulary of scenography by linking this design style to the literary trope of magical realism. Whilst magical realism has been previously employed to describe theatre that blends supernatural themes with realism in relation to texts and dramaturgy (Smith 2004, Holland 2014) the genre has not previously been considered in any depth in relation to scenography. The inclusion of “magical” elements, such as stars appearing in the scrapyard debris in *Scrappers* (2013) and the glowing pool in *Narvik* (2015) show the capacity of these ordinary, mundane north-west places, a scrapyard (*Scrappers*) and a basement in a Liverpool home (*Narvik*), to encompass extraordinary events. Expressionistic, “magical” scenographic visualisations such as the twisted metal-effect “branches” intersecting the living room of *Lost Monsters* (2009) and the raining window in *Scrappers*, are symbolic of Liverpool and the northwest undergoing transformation. Such designs offered an open-ended representation of

Liverpool-ness and the neighbouring north-west, where identities and place are malleable and constantly undergoing change.

7.1.2 Scenography, space and Liverpool identity

This research has built on previous writings on space as a key component of scenography (McAuley 1999, Howard 2002, Collins and Nisbet 2010) by considering the ways in which theatrical space is organised to visualise Liverpool as place on stage. Referring to discourses on space and place drawn from social geography, in particular the work of Doreen Massey (1991, 1994, 2005), this thesis offers a valuable contribution to research on the relationship between scenography, space and cultural identity. It demonstrates how scenography can be seen to encompass Massey's central argument, that there is an '...association between the spatial and the fixation of meaning' (Massey 2005: 20). The organisation of stage space was integral to how the designers of the case studies presented different versions of the city in order to engage audiences and manipulate their relationship to the places and characters being presented.

This extends to the ways in which the audience is contained by scenography, with designs such as Soutra Gilmour's for *Eric's* encompassing those watching and blurring the boundary between the theatre's architecture and the place being represented. In his designs for *Paradise Bound* and *The Way Home*, Bob Bailey created clear boundaries between the audience and the stage and overlapped represented places on stage to show who was included and excluded within various groupings of Liverpool and Scouse identities. In *Paradise Bound*, he utilised a fence that featured silhouettes of famous Liverpool landmarks to separate the marginalised area of Dingle from the poster advertising the regeneration of Liverpool. Although the working-class Dingle family had their living room overlaid with the fallout from the building work necessary to carry out this regeneration, Bailey's organisation of space showed how they were clearly removed from its benefits. In *The Way Home*, Bailey visualised the Scouse working-class Thompson home as occupying exactly the same dimensions as Liverpool Travellers, the O'Connor's' caravan. Whilst this second design potentially simplified the distinct experiences of the two families, Bailey's use of space clearly communicated to audiences the intersections and divisions of the characters' Liverpool identities.

The ways in which stage space was organised in *Unprotected* and *Urban Legend* was deliberately designed to disturb the audience. In recognising this, this research builds on arguments made by Esther Armstrong in her PhD thesis (2010), relating to what I term a “bare stage truth”. Stages that appear ‘less obviously designed’ are frequently employed in verbatim theatre (Armstrong 2010: 282). This thesis shows this aesthetic employed in a verbatim production in a regional theatre (*Unprotected*). This extends Armstrong’s work by considering how “bare” staging, with areas left empty of set and props, was used to reduce the separation between the audience and the events being depicted. Such organisation of space was shown to make the productions’ unpalatable themes - poverty and substance abuse in *Urban Legend*, sex work, violence and murder in *Unprotected* - “too close to home”.

7.1.3 The representation of Scouse Identities

The scenography of Made in Liverpool productions enforces, interrogates and destabilises previously constructed imaginings of Liverpool and Scouse identities. This research has shown how The Everyman and Playhouse have the ability to effect and affect the construction of Scouse identity and revealed their complicity in the perpetuation of stereotypes. It has expanded on Tony Crowley’s writings on the ‘scouse [sic] industry’, concerning how Scouse as a cultural identity has been packaged and sold from within the city (Crowley 2012: 63). The Scouse industry has been previously considered in relation to Liverpool theatre by Maria Barrett in her PhD research (2016), however this was limited to comedy productions at The Royal Court Liverpool. Although these Scouse stereotypes, including “Fella”, “Mam” and “Scouse-Bird” type characters, are often exaggerated intentionally for comic effect, the readings of their presentation differ locally and nationally. Overall, reviewers in the national press understood these Scouse characterisations to be authentic depictions of Liverpool identities. Local press, however, generally took a more nuanced analytical view of such portrayals, recognising when a representation was being used to subvert or destabilise a stereotype – as in the case of the men in *Unprotected*, and when their use risked limiting wider understanding of Scouse identities – as in the Dingle scenes of *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi*.

The destabilisation by scenography of a preconception of Scouse identities as being fixed can also be seen in who and what the audience were shown as being Scouse. This included the character of Jodie in *Scrappers* going beyond the expectations of her “Scouse-Bird”

presentation to reveal her intelligence and ambition and, in *Paradise Bound*, Anthony's' queer identity not shown as being at odds with his Scouse masculinity, symbolised by his football shirt. However, this thesis has observed this expansion by scenography, of who and what Scouse identity can potentially encompass, still to have problematic limitations. Across the case studies only one principal north-west character, Ryan (David Judge) in *Scrappers*, was played by an actor of colour and an overview of other Made in Liverpool Productions (Appendix 3) from the period suggests this lack of diversity to be typical. Despite works by Mark Christian (1997), Raymond Costello (2001) and John Belchem (2006, 2014) having shown black identity in Liverpool to be complex and intersectional, The Everyman and Playhouse perpetuate Scouse as a white, working-class, heteronormative identity.

7.1.4 Local and national press reception to visualisations of Liverpool

National reviews of Made in Liverpool productions repeatedly express a preference for representational designs rather than those that contain more symbolic elements. The subtler meanings of the case study productions' depictions of Scouse identities, reflected in their designs, were largely ignored by the national press who instead praised them as true-to-life visualisations, especially when they encapsulated an austere, bleak Liverpool experience. Moments of visual parody and/or humour such as working-class characters dancing on bin lids in *Once upon a Time at the Adelphi* or Wayne's homemade shrine being decorated with marijuana paraphernalia in *Urban Legend* were either read as authentic depictions of Scouse resilience, or in the case of the latter, overlooked entirely.

Whilst the more complex, expressionistic scenography of *Lost Monsters*, *Scrappers* and *Narvik* was widely praised, the design was seen as having transcended the narratives' Liverpool and north-west settings, with the productions being commended for their global and worldly themes. This demonstrates that when visualisations of Liverpool do not carry expected, previously established interpretations and meanings, the national press do not associate them with their limited imaginings of the city. Local press's tendency to produce more nuanced reading of scenographic visualisations of Liverpool as place extended to those productions that went outside the apparent expected design approaches for Made in Liverpool productions. This discrepancy in the local and national press coverage has implications for researchers considering theatre criticism and scenography more widely as

it suggests a national bias persists in the reviewing of regional theatre. Taken as a whole, national reviews of Made in Liverpool productions infer that representational design is somehow more appropriate for work that visualises regional places and narratives, than that which contains symbolic elements and/or emphasise a play's discursive and political themes.

In its analysis of press reception, this research has uncovered how there persists a limited vocabulary that critics appear to feel comfortable using in relation to scenography. It appears that most reviewers still deem designs' principal function to be supportive of the text, with any material elements that appear to communicate meanings in their own right considered superfluous and distracting. In adding to the slim research that directly considers the relationship between scenography and critical reception, this thesis contributes to the development of a more developed critical language with which reviewers may consider design.

7.1.5 Cultural identity and scenography

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006) demonstrates how shared culture, including the '... cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts...' allows people to think as a nation (Anderson 2006: 141). The scenography of Made in Liverpool productions is integral to their establishment as such 'cultural products' bringing an 'imagined community' of Liverpool and Scouse identities together (ibid). Scouse identity has no definitive, fixed, coherent ideology, politics or even an agreed geographical boundary, instead, a sense of Scouse-ness, as disseminated by cultural products, including theatre, is integral to its construction. This research has revealed how designs which present complex, expressionistic visualisations of Scouse-ness employ a Liverpool perspective on local issues and their wider causes and effects. Ronaldo Munck (2003) argues that Liverpool, rather than closing itself from outside forces, should look to make them work from the inside towards the well-being of local people (Munck 2003: 6). Transformative scenography, in which the material elements of the design are shown as malleable, such as that considered in Chapter 6, suggests how the city and its inhabitants are not passive in the face of outside influence, but instead have the ability to change and resist. Liverpool cultural identity was presented as adaptable, resilient and with its own

agency, expressed through multifaceted, dynamic representations of Liverpool and Scouse identities.

7.2 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis represents the first in-depth, academic examination of regional theatre and identity through the lens of scenography. As I discussed within the literature review (1.2), there is an identified lack of scholarship on regional theatre as a whole and to date there has been no examination of the relationship between identity, as represented on stage in a UK regional theatre, and scenography. Scenography is a rapidly expanding lens and field, as theatre and performance, in practice and in theory, shifts from a perspective that privileges the logocentric, towards analysis of the complexity of what constitutes the total *mise en scène* of production. This research brings regional theatre into the conversation, highlighting the circularity between onstage representation and cultural identity, whereby one is co-constitutive by the other. This thesis also looks at scenography as a cultural product, rather than a process. In doing so, it makes a secondary contribution to knowledge by adding to the growing body of work that recognises the capacity of scenography to carry meanings independently of the text, highlighting the political implications of the ways these meanings are read by different audiences.

7.3 Potential for Future Research

The findings of this thesis could be expanded to consider designs of new writing produced at other regional theatres, adding to the body of academic research that seeks to revise the important contribution of regional work to the British theatre landscape. This study has concentrated on Made in Liverpool productions, which became a central pillar of The Everyman and Playhouse's programming post 2003. Although the history of The Everyman has been previously documented (Tanner 1974, Merkin 2004,) attention is yet to be paid to the scenography of past productions. Since The Everyman returned to a repertory model in 2017, reviewers have repeatedly referred to an Everyman style production when describing plays' with minimalist designs (Fairclough 2017, Brown 2017

and Smith 2018).¹⁶⁶ An enquiry into the historiography and development of this minimalist aesthetic at The Everyman would be enlightening as to the evolution of the theatre's identity and its impact on wider readings of scenography.

The lack of recognition as to the importance of scenography has been emphasised by the paucity of material relating to production processes that was available in the AHRC Everyman archive. The principle source material for this thesis emerged as production photography, reviews and promotional material, all of which are limited in their ability to convey the processes that lead to the final design. The increasing digitisation of designers' process materials, notes, photographs, CAD drawings, and correspondence has further exacerbated a situation where largely what remains of a production is marketing material. Whilst this was not detrimental to this particular enquiry, further research and discussion needs to be undertaken to encourage theatres to, where possible, preserve artefacts relating to the process of production.

7.5 Concluding reflection

Liverpool is constantly changing, affected by global socio-economic and political influences. Representations of the city as place and of its inhabitants on stage can encompass a multiplicity of experiences and recognise Liverpool-ness as being multifaceted. This extends to contributing to the notion of Scouse identity as something that is constantly undergoing transformation, rather than existing in any fixed singularity. Made in Liverpool productions are a cultural product that in turn contribute to Liverpool's cultural landscape and identity, constructing what Anderson terms 'a vocabulary of kinship' (Anderson 2006: 143). This vocabulary includes scenography as an expression of the tangible and intangible elements that connect individuals to Liverpool and Scouse identity, and opens up Liverpool culture to the wider world.

¹⁶⁶ Robin Brown, for *WhatsOnStage* (2017) referred to *The Sum* (2017) as 'classic Everyman' (Brown 2017). Damon Fairclough for *Northern Soul* proclaimed it a 'powerful Everyman original' (Fairclough 2017). In his review for *WhatsOnStage* of *The Big I Am* (2018), Nigel Smith referred to the production as 'the kind of work the Everyman was built on' (Smith 2018).

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Appendix 1 Interviews:

Interviewee	Productions at The Everyman and Playhouse	Format & date of Interview
Ruairi Murchison	<i>Intemperance</i> (2007) (Chapter 3) <i>3 Sisters on Hope Street</i> (2008) (Chapter 4). Also (not included in this thesis): <i>Tartuffe</i> (2008) (Playhouse)	Skype Interview 16 March 2016
Peter McKintosh	<i>Hope Place</i> (2014) (Chapter 4). Also (not included in this thesis): <i>Anthony and Cleopatra</i> (2010) (Playhouse)	Email correspondence 5 March 2016
Mari Lotherington	<i>Scrappers</i> (2013) (Chapter 6)	Skype interview 4 March 2016
Maeve Black	<i>Narvik</i> (2015) (Chapter 6)	Skype interview 3 February 2016

Appendix 2 Review platforms

Name	Medium	Demographic
<i>The Guardian/ The Observer</i>	Broadsheet newspaper /online	National
<i>The Telegraph</i>	Broadsheet newspaper /online	National
<i>The Independent</i>	Broadsheet newspaper /online	National
<i>The Financial Times</i>	Broadsheet newspaper /online	National
<i>The Sun</i>	Tabloid newspaper/online	National
<i>The Mirror</i>	Tabloid newspaper/online	National
<i>The Daily Mail</i>	Tabloid newspaper/online	National
<i>The Herald</i>	Broadsheet Scottish newspaper	Scotland
<i>The Metro (Liverpool)</i>	Tabloid free newspaper	Merseyside
<i>Liverpool Echo</i>	Liverpool newspaper /online	Merseyside
<i>The Liverpool Daily Post</i>	Liverpool newspaper /online	Merseyside
<i>The Wirral Globe</i>	Liverpool newspaper /online	Merseyside
<i>The Crosby Herald</i>	Liverpool newspaper /online	Merseyside
<i>WhatsOnStage</i>	Theatre news and reviews website	National
<i>The Stage</i>	Theatre newspaper and website	National
<i>Reviews Gate</i>	Theatre reviews website	National
<i>TheatreWorld Internet Magazine</i>	Theatre reviews website	National
<i>Your Move</i>	Liverpool property magazine	Merseyside
<i>British Theatre Guide</i>	Theatre reviews website	National
<i>The Public Reviews</i>	Theatre reviews website	National
<i>The Reviews Hub</i>	Theatre reviews website	National
<i>Curtain Up</i>	Theatre reviews website	International
<i>Indie London</i>	London lifestyle and culture website	National
<i>Scotland on Sunday (The Scotsman)</i>	Scottish Sunday newspaper,	Scotland
<i>Culture Wars</i>	Books, films, theatre, art review website	London/ National
<i>The Skinny</i>	Regional lifestyle and culture website	Regional
<i>The List</i>	Arts and culture website	National
<i>Get Into This</i>	Liverpool music website	Merseyside
<i>Northern Soul</i>	Culture in North of the U.K website	Regional
<i>The Nerve</i>	Arts, cultural and social issues online magazine	Merseyside
<i>Merseysider Magazine</i>	Local interest magazine	Merseyside
<i>Made Up</i>	Liverpool Theatre blog	Merseyside
<i>Liverpool Confidential</i>	Liverpool arts and culture website	Merseyside
<i>The Nerve</i>	Liverpool arts and culture website	Merseyside
<i>Welcome to Liverpool</i>	Liverpool arts and culture website	Merseyside
<i>Liverpool Mersey Mart</i>	Local interest free paper	Merseyside
<i>Seven Streets</i>	Liverpool lifestyle and culture blog	Merseyside
<i>Chris High Reviews</i>	Books, music and theatre reviews, blog	Merseyside
<i>Liverpool Sound and Vision</i>	Liverpool arts and culture website	Merseyside

Appendix 3

Productions included in this thesis are indicated by asterisk.

Made in Liverpool Productions 2003 - 2015			
Title	Year	Venue	Made in Liverpool Status
<i>Fly</i>	2004	The Everyman	By Katie Douglas
* <i>Urban Legend</i>	2004	The Everyman	By local writer Laurence Wilson
<i>The Kindness of Strangers</i>	2004	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool.
<i>The Morris</i>	2005	The Everyman	By local writer Helen Blakeman
<i>The Mollusc</i>	2006	Playhouse	Adaption of play from The Playhouse's archive.
* <i>Paradise Bound</i>	2006	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
* <i>Unprotected</i>	2006	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
* <i>The Way Home</i>	2006	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
<i>The May Queen</i>	2007	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
<i>The Cruel Sea</i>	2007	The Everyman	By local writer John Fay
<i>The Electric Hills</i>	2007	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
* <i>Intemperance</i>	2007	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
<i>The Flint Street Nativity</i>	2007	Playhouse	Set in Liverpool
<i>Tartuffe</i>	2008	The Playhouse	Adapted by Liverpool poet Roger McGough
* <i>3 Sisters on Hope Street</i>	2008	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
* <i>Once upon a Time at the Adelphi</i>	2008	Playhouse	Set in Liverpool
* <i>Eric's</i>	2008	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
<i>Proper Clever</i>	2008	Playhouse	By local writer Frank Cottrell Boyce
<i>King Lear</i>	2008	The Everyman	Starring Liverpool actor Pete Postlethwaite as Lear
<i>Spirits of the Stones</i>	2009	The Everyman	By local writer Laurence Wilson
* <i>Lost Monsters</i>	2009	The Everyman	By local writer Laurence Wilson
<i>The Hypochondriac</i>	2009	Playhouse	Adapted by Liverpool poet Roger McGough
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	2010	Playhouse	Starring Liverpool-born actress Kim Cattrall as Cleopatra
<i>Canary</i>	2010	Playhouse	Partially set in Liverpool. By local writer Jonathan Harvey
<i>Dead Heavy Fantastic</i>	2011	The Everyman	Set in Liverpool
<i>The Swallowing Dark</i>	2011	Playhouse Studio	By local writer Lizzie Nunnery
<i>Held</i>	2012	Playhouse Studio	By local writer Joe Ward Munrow
<i>The Misanthrope</i>	2013	The Playhouse	Adapted by Liverpool poet Roger McGough
* <i>Scrappers</i>	2013	The Playhouse Studio	By local writer Daniel Matthews
* <i>Hope Place</i>	2014	The Everyman	See Set in Liverpool
* <i>Narvik</i>	2015	The Playhouse Studio	Set in Liverpool

